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12
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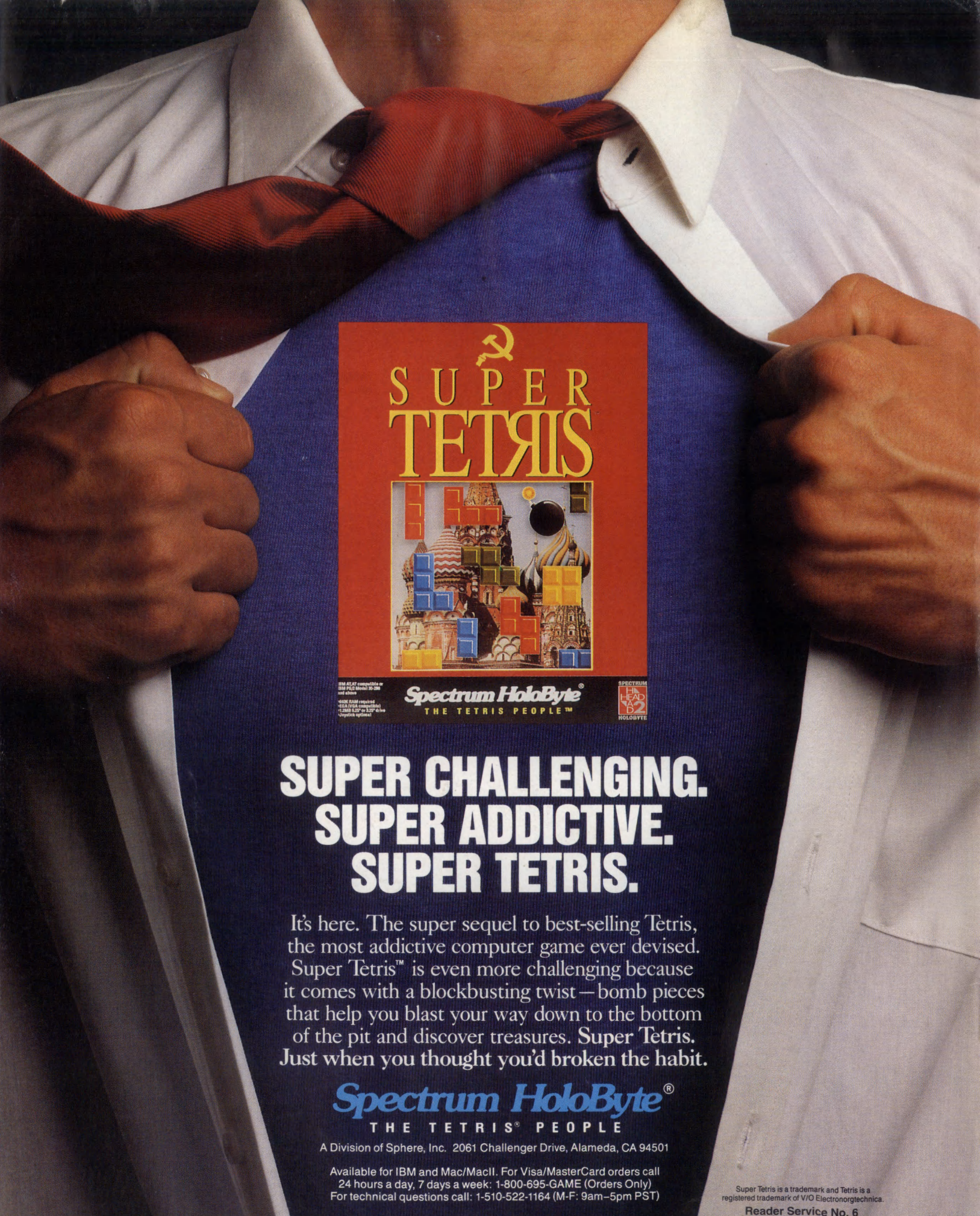

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STRATEGY

8 The Perfect General
Range wars, by Brian Walker

10 MacArthur's War
Battles for Korea, by Stuart Mitchell

12 The Lost Admiral
Class of '91, by Stuart Mitchell

14 Western Front
The liberation of Europe 1944-45, by Brian Walker

16 Harpoon Battleset 4
Sandy Eisen previews Battleset 4 for **Harpoon**

19 Riders of Rohan
Ian Marsh engages in horse play in Tolkien's Middle-earth

20 Mega lo Mania
More power to your elbow, by John Scott

22 Megafortress
Steven Wartofsky embarks on the flight of the Old Dog

24 Harpoon Battlebook
The official strategy and tactics guide, explored by Sandy Eisen

26 The Think Tank
Stuart Mitchell plots a course for **Armada 2525**

28 Wing Commander 2
Vengeance of the Kilrathi and the Speech Accessory Pack, reviewed by Marcus L Rowland

ADVENTURE

31 Shadow Sorcerer
Philip Murphy leaves his heart in Pax Tharkas

32 Robin Hood
Theo Clarke gets thwacked!

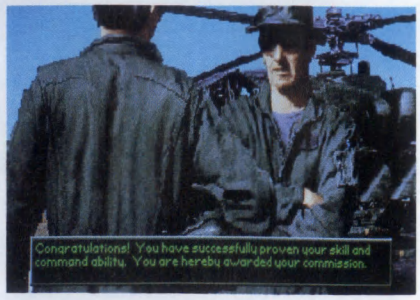
34 Pools of Darkness
Jamie Thomson raises a question of character

36 Mama sez...
Mapping, anyone? Plain brown mappers go high-tech

38 Saving graces
Greg Ellsworth supplies hints for **Megatraveller 2**

40 Timequest – a private function
Part two of our walk-through

Power play: Mega lo Mania, page 20



Flight fantastic: Gunship 2000, page 66

Number 13
December 1991
US edition

He who plays, wins

Cover: Martian Memorandum from Access. Reviewed on page 48

REGULARS AND SPECIALS

48 Martian Memorandum
Read my lips, says Theo Clarke

50 ECES
Brian Walker on the show that wasn't all there – the European Computer Entertainment Show, held at Earls Court 2 in London

60 Issues index
Find out which computer games were reviewed in which issues of *Strategy Plus 1–12* , and locate those damn fine critiques

78 Letters
The write stuff from readers on both sides of the Atlantic – and beyond!

SIMULATIONS

58 Software shuffle
Philip Murphy deals the cards in our gambling special

66 Gunship 2000
Steven Wartofsky chooses to hover in plain sight

68 The Hangar
Commander Crunch helps out with hints for **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** and **Megafortress**

72 Nighthawk F-117A
Stealth Fighter 2.0, clone, sweet clone, by Paul Rigby

77 Air Warrior
Dial M for modem to discover about this on-line air combat game. Our pilot Paul Rigby spills the beans

SPORTS

62 The Sports Locker
Joseph McCullough takes up the manager's challenge, as delivered by **Micro League Baseball**

64 Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball
Joseph McCullough experiences the yield of dreams

Route one

US software houses often complain about the tardiness of American magazines in reviewing their games. UK software houses often complain British magazines review their games too early. What gives? The respective answers to both questions reveal some interesting differences not only between the software houses of the respective countries, but between the press as well. The fortunes of the software industry and the press that reports on it are intertwined.

It should come as no surprise, then, to find that the attitudes of the Fourth Estate are a reflection of those espoused by the software industry itself. In the USA the arcade games market has been detached from the 'serious' computer games market for some time now. In the arcade world the shelf-life of a game is something like a month at best.

In the more grown-up market of computer games it is now recognized that many games have, if not an infinite life span, then at least a respectable longevity. For example, the only time **Gunship** stopped selling was when the release of **Gunship 2000** was imminent. Nevertheless, prompt reviews and pre-release hype are important cash flow aids. (A more questionable 'cash flow aid' is the recent practice of putting empty boxes of a forthcoming game on display. This is something of a variant on the 'bait and switch' tactic. It can only be a matter of time before some litigation junkie sues for 'emotional distress'. A condition brought on, he will claim, by the discovery that the box for **In the Year 2525** he had just espied in his local software shop, contained nothing but a couple of dead spiders.)

US magazines are somewhat hindered in their efforts to climb aboard the hype machine by long lead times. Part of the problem, as this magazine has just discovered, is the time required getting the issue from printer to newsstand – three weeks at best. Add this to the lethargy of some of the software houses in actually sending out the games (rare is the game that goes Airborne Express), throw in the reluctance of most magazines to review a game that isn't boxed and candy wrapped, and part of the answer to the initial question begins to emerge.

It is in this last respect that US magazines differ the most from their British counterpart. You only have to mention that have you have an *idea* for a game to a British computer journalist and chances are that he'll review *and* put an 'exclusive' tag on it (**Deuteros** has actually been on the chart of one magazine for the past six months even though the game is still not finished, let alone released, at the time of writing). Until recently this approach was actually encouraged by the software houses, which were rooted in the arcade 'anything goes' mentality.

Slowly but surely, though, the UK industry is ringing the changes as the market here grows up. The invitations to pop along to a software house, have a few drinks, and 'review' a game are becoming more infrequent (or so I'm told). The aim of this magazine is to attempt to tread a path somewhere between the excesses of the UK press and the worthy approach of its US counterparts.

The eagerness of UK journalists is commendable but unless married to a respect for the reader it becomes worthless. The attitude of US magazines is, by and large, admirable, but where does it leave the punters aching for guidance on which game to buy? Be they in Detroit or Doncaster, and be it *Strategy Plus* or the *San Francisco Chronicle*, nobody wants yesterday's papers. The editorial dictum here is to provide information and provide it fast – the route one approach. In this sense we are lucky in having a large team of writers, most of whom are adept at quickly getting to the heart of a game.

But we are not averse to taking a few shortcuts: if necessary, as in the case of monster games like **Third Reich**, there will be a follow-up article to address points not covered initially.

In some cases pre-production copies will be reviewed providing the game is playable to a finish. Reviews based on early versions, like **The Perfect General** this issue, will be marked as such.

Often, like the aforementioned **Third Reich**, the game's release comes months after the review appeared. To ease this and differing UK/US release dates, an index will be published every six months so that recalling the original review will not be left entirely to the vagaries of memory. Previews are exactly that – judgment day comes later on these games.

In the US recently there has been much debate about advertorials in magazines put out by an unscrupulous publisher that have not been marked thus (the story in question even made the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*). By laying this magazine's policies on the line like this, I believe the readers and the software houses will know not only where we're coming from, but where we're going to.

On the stump

Our next issue will see the inauguration of what will be our annual readers awards. We will be asking you to vote on the best games of the year in each category. The nominees will be listed and be based on the games reviewed in this magazine from issues 4 through 14 (for reference see our index this issue). This apparently restrictive format is purely to ease compilation of the results. If you think there is a game that we haven't covered and that you feel should be included then please drop us a line. The only condition for a game's inclusion is that its primary release was during the past 12 months. SP

STRATEGY PLUS

UK
Lamerton House, 27 High Street,
Ealing, London W5 5DF
Editorial: 081 567 7740
Fax: 081 579 6485
Compuserve: 100016,2503

US
PO Box 21, Hancock, VT 05748
Editorial: 802 767 4622
Fax: 802 767 4623
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Editor
Brian Walker

Production
Ian Marsh
Compuserve: 100015,3032

US advertising manager
Mike Lasatho

Cover illustration
Martian Memorandum
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Interior illustrations
Alice Foyle

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The Perfect General

Range wars

By Brian Walker

Programmed by
White Wolf Productions

Published by
QQP

Systems
IBM PC and Amiga

PC graphics
VGA, EGA

Supports
Adlib sound card, keyboard, mouse, joystick, modem

Number of players
1–2

Notes
Review based on version 0.69

Most gamers will be familiar with the scenario known as 'the lost weekend'. This occurs when a game comes along that is so compulsive, so addictive that real life is temporarily rejected. Instead, entire weekends are spent gazing into the uncaring blink of a monitor in an almost mystical attempt to resolve the puzzle/conflict depicted therein. The last game that had me almost permanently plugged into the hard drive was **Railroad Tycoon**. And now there is **The Perfect General**.

The Perfect General was programmed by Bob Ratofsky and Mark Baldwin, who make up White Wolf Productions. Baldwin, of course, is best known for the seminal strategy game **Empire**. Like that game, **The Perfect General** takes place in a largely abstract world. The city names will be familiar but the geography bears little relation to reality.

Altogether there are 13 scenarios, the objective in each is the same: conquer and hold cities. The game system is incredibly simple and genuinely intuitive, so much so that I was able to steam right in with scant reference to the 50-page manual.

At the outset, players receive a number of points with which to buy units. Thirteen different types are available, from infantry to heavy artillery, the cost of which depends on their effectiveness.

Each scenario lasts a predefined number of turns, though the player can opt for a short game or a long game (generally four to six turns longer).

Points are scored for the number of cities held at the end of each turn. In the early version of the manual, control of a city was somewhat ambiguously defined. As it transpired, at least one unit needs to be in the city if points are to be scored. If an enemy unit shares the city then neither side scores for that city.

A turn is broken down into a series of phases, one of which is 'passing fire', or 'opportunity fire' as it is sometimes referred to. In essence this is a real-time phase within the turn; as a unit comes into line of sight it may be fired upon by any unit that may see it and which hasn't fired previously. A flashing 'F' signal alerts the player to such an occurrence.

Movement is very simple; just point and click and the unit will go merrily on its way to the selected destination and take the optimum route. Combat is based on the percentile system seen in many boardgames. This is not entirely surprising as the program is a conversion of a generic board wargame system that was used for tournament play.

Fire is ranged – this is an important tactical consideration in the game, especially with regard to artillery, which on one hand can do tremendous damage, but on the other is expensive and can easily be overrun.

The designers have mercifully eschewed the iconic representation of units. Instead, tanks look vaguely like tanks, while the more challenging task of depicting light engineers (who blow up or build bridges) and infantry (cannon fodder) has been solved by the use of flags with an appropriate alpha designation. The map graphics are excellent: terrain is clearly defined, while the recce map provides a rapid guide to who is where. Underlying all this is the inevitable hex grid which, traditionalists may be pleased to hear, can be toggled on or off.

One of the more unusual aspects of the game is the deliberate lack of conventional play balance. The idea is that each scenario should constitute a 'match' – for example, after playing the defender, say, the player then replays a scenario as the attacker. The respective scores are totalled and then stored for posterity in one of the most comprehensive (for this purpose) databases I have ever seen. Not only are the scores themselves saved, but also the number of losses on each side together with the artillery efficiency. There are also separate directories for player histories and scenario histories. All this adds to the replay value of the game as players strive more than ever to improve on past performance.

In any strategy game the first question players ask is: 'How good is the AI?'. The answer in this case has to be average, at best. And yet in a strange sort of way, this does not detract too much from the game. Or at least it does not detract from the desire to want to play it. This largely stems from the aforementioned scoring system which encourages players

to try to do better. This is often used as a cop-out by many programmers as an excuse for poor AI, but here the idea has definite merit. In any event, just how many games are there that contain a truly strong AI?

When asked about the game's AI, Bob Ratofsky pointed out that the version I have is quite an early one and that the AI has been strengthened since then. I also asked him to explain some of the difficulties of producing a good AI. His reply warrants repeating: 'The issue of artificial intelligence as it applies to computer-controlled gaming opponents is a very complex one. As a programmer-designer, one has a number of options available. One thing that we pride ourselves on is that we do not resort to letting the computer opponent cheat – it plays an honest game based on its analytical abilities, and only based on the information that is should have available as a game player. I personally dislike games that "cheat" in their computer-controlled game play, as many do (some more obviously than others).

Under analysis

'The task of designing the analysis for a game as complex in structure as **The Perfect General** is far from a simple one. Look, for example, at all of the attempts that have been made to develop a strong AI for chess. Chess has had 500 years of analysis (pre-computer), but very good computer-controlled strategies have only been developed within the past five years or so. And chess is a very simple game compared with **The Perfect General**.

'Chess has a single scenario consisting of 64 locations that need to be considered, whereas **The Perfect General** is designed for an infinite number of scenarios of varying world size. In chess, there are at most 16 units to control and 16 opposing units, consisting of seven unit types. **The Perfect General**'s computer player must deal with 11 unit types, and a practically unlimited number of units for both its and the opponent's side. Chess has no terrain to consider – at best locations are either blocking or not. Chess has no weather to consider. Chess has no sighting issues. And yet, the level of analysis required in a computer chess-game requires a lot of time to be able to determine the best actions.

'How many magnitudes more of analysis are needed to determine the equivalent best actions to be taken in **The Perfect General**? We know, because we tried! The biggest problem we ran into was the targeted machines for **The Perfect General**. We really didn't want to limit ourselves only to the high-end machines, particularly in the Amiga market. And yet, it would be unacceptable if the computer opponent took five minutes (or more) every turn, or one minute for every action. If we were developing the game for a Cray, we'd be able to give you a much better AI, but I doubt we'd be able to sell enough copies to be able to pay even for the computer time needed to develop it. So we had to make a few compromises.

'Our goal was to have an opponent that would provide a good game. One that would spot weaknesses in your strategies and take advantage of them. One that would keep you thinking, and keep the game exciting. One that would use different strategies within the same scenario, so that each scenario would have significant replay value, and to keep the human player from getting into a single-strategy approach. These issues directly address the issue of game play.

'I do wish we were able to provide a computer opponent that was the match of the best human strategists, but this was not possible given the current state of the art of entertainment computer hardware systems.'

Dog's day

I felt that the average quality of the AI did not matter. For one thing the unbalanced nature of the scenarios provided compensation when playing the underdog, and second there is an excellent handicapping system that reduces the number of 'buy points' available to the human player. The down side to this is that it tends to distort the player's score in the all-important hall of fame. Some sort of redress would have been welcome here when playing with a handicap.

The different computer generals buy different units each time they take the battlefield. While this approach provides variety, it can also lead to some bizarre formations. In *The long and winding road* scenario, General Grant (for it is he) bought lots of heavy artillery and stationed it in open terrain. After turn three it had all been overrun and by turn 10 Grant's ragbag army had been eliminated.

The biggest advantage of the solo game is the hidden movement factor, which enables ambushes to be plotted. This is lost in the two-player game but more than made up for in other ways. The designers have got round the interface problem in two-player games in a simple yet ingenious way. A variety of joystick/mouse/keyboard options are provided. One player takes his turn using the mouse, say, while the other can take passing fire with the joystick or keyboard. It's a simple system that isn't cumbersome.

A complete match can be completed in about three hours on average making for an excellent evenings entertainment. Even given the lack of hidden movement this is one of the best two-player computer games I have ever played. There is very little down time, and there are constant tactical challenges right from the purchase of the first unit.

Modem war

The modem set-up is very easy to configure from the menus. Once this has been done it can also be saved. The modem option allows the hidden movement factor to make a comeback in the two player game. Unfortunately this did not make up for other weaknesses, the main one being speed. At 2400 baud the game dragged. Don't consider playing the game by modem unless you can log on at a minimum of 9600 baud. Even then the turn-based nature of the game is a handicap in this mode and raises the question of whether non real-time games are suitable for modem play.

Overall **The Perfect General** should be considered by anyone with a remote interest in strategy games. The shortcomings of the AI when in solitaire mode can easily be overlooked. In the two-player mode the game takes on a special richness and can be unhesitatingly recommended. The manual is first class and the high quality maps for each scenario are an added luxury. Add to this excellent graphics and tremendous sound effects and you have a real winner.

Considering this is a first effort from QQP it is a remarkable achievement; not quite perfect, but close enough for a cigar. SP

MacArthur's War

Battles for Korea, June 1950 – April 1951

By Stuart Mitchell

MacArthur's War is the latest IBM conversion from Australian outfit SSG. Using its venerable Battlefront system, SSG presents eight scenarios covering various battles fought during the Korean war.

For those not familiar with the Battlefront system, a short primer is in order. The Battlefront system is a tactical and operational simulation of battles during the middle of the 20th century. The Battlefront system was originally designed to handle the battles of the Second World War, but does quite nicely at simulating the Korean war and even some later conflicts.

Corps level

The system is designed for corps-level conflicts. Each side is given up to three divisions and up to four regiments in each division. Each regiment may have up to four battalions. This hierarchy is a critical part of the game system.

Players take on the role of divisional or regimental commanders, issuing orders to their units at the appropriate level for each unit. Divisions are the locus for supply and the source of deployable divisional assets. Regiments are ordered to take specific objectives, delay the enemy, go into reserve or attack.

Players never issue orders to the individual units on the map (battalions). The computer carries out regimental orders given to constituent battalions.

This command-oriented system was quite controversial when first introduced several years ago, and it is still controversial today, even as other games use similar approaches (Peter Turcan's games come to mind). Players must learn to cope with the way in which the system works. There is no opportunity to micromanage units into optimal attacks. Units do not always take the 'best' approach. And flanking manoeuvres are nigh impossible.

On the other hand, I am continually impressed by some aspects of the system. The regimental AI is quite good about rotating fatigued or heavily damaged units out of the front line. In general the movement routines are solid and make good use of roads. Routs and retreats are handled reasonably as well.

Other aspects of the Battlefront system are quite elegant. The system gives various bonuses for using combined arms, artillery, and off-map air and artillery support. Armour v non-armour adjustments are also made. Units are rated for their level of efficiency (trained through elite), along with their raw combat value and weapons type. Losses are taken as percentages. Fatigue conditions are also tracked. All of this detail is readily available, but usually hidden so that players are not needlessly distracted from the main thrust of play.

Paint your wagons

One final bonus is the inclusion of two scenario building utilities: Warpaint and Warplan. Warplan is used to enter the data for all the units involved and also to lay out the basic map and terrain. Warplan may also be used to modify the existing scenarios.

Warpaint is a paint utility that allows players to paint map terrain and unit icons. In EGA or VGA, players have access to the full-map routines and can create maps fully as beautiful as those included in the game. In fact, smart players will cut and paste art from the included scenarios into their own work.

For several years now, **Rommel – Battles for North Africa** has been my favourite Battlefront package. **Rommel** included a lot of scenarios (eight) and they were all highly mobile, finely balanced affairs. Against that standard, **MacArthur's War** does not quite measure up. **MacArthur's War** does include eight scenarios, and each is nicely balanced, but the situations are not always as interesting as those in **Rommel**.

Part of the problem is the terrain in Korea. Korea is a peninsula dominated by rugged ridges and narrow river valleys. There is little open terrain in which to wage armoured warfare. To their credit, SSG and Dan Antolec chose some of the more mobile conflicts for the game. Still, many of the scenarios seem pretty static.

Korea minded

Another problem is that two of the most interesting battles of the war are not included – the invasion at Inchon and the attack at Pusan. These are excluded because SSG included them in its **Halls of Montezuma** game. Having played those scenarios as well as the ones included in **MacArthur's War**, I must confess I wouldn't have minded seeing them repeated. This is a bit unfair of course, and my best recommendation is that those interested in the Korean War should pick up both **MacArthur's War** and **Halls of Montezuma**. The scenarios in **MacArthur's War** are sometimes less spectacular, but worthwhile none the less.

One twist is that players who enjoy attacking will usually find themselves picking the communist forces over the UN forces.

As is usual with Battlefront games on the IBM, the graphics are superb in EGA or VGA and merely adequate in other modes. Speed is good even on slow IBMs (such as the one I have). The interface is keyboard driven, but nicely structured. The menus are quite easy to use and the manual descriptions are almost as intimidating than the real thing. Another plus is the glossy full colour maps for each scenario that SSG has included.

MacArthur's War is a fine game. And if you are interested in the Korean war, it's the only game in town. Although **MacArthur's War** is not quite as much fun as **Rommel**, the game is recommended. SP

Published by
SSG

Designed by
Roger Keating, Dan Antolec and Ian Trout

Systems
IBM PC, Apple II

PC graphics
EGA, CGA, MCGA, VGA and Hercules

Players
1–2

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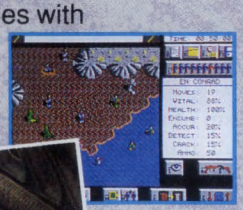

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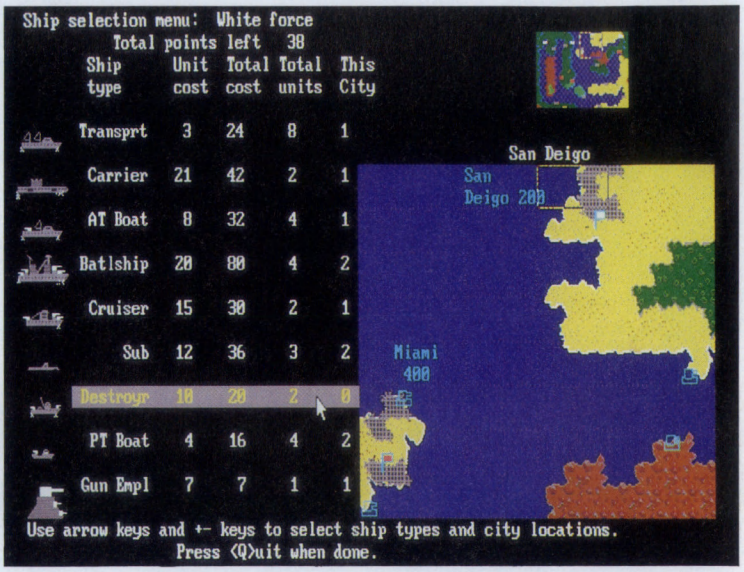
OMNITREND SOFTWARE

The Lost Admiral

Class of '91

By Stuart Mitchell


Ship selection menu: White force
Total points left 38
Ship type
Unit cost
Total cost
Total units
This City
Transprt 3 24 8 1
Carrier 21 42 2 1
AT Boat 8 32 4 1
Batlship 20 80 4 2
Cruiser 15 30 2 1
Sub 12 36 3 2
Destroyr 10 20 2 0
PT Boat 4 16 4 2
Gun Empl 7 7 1 1
San Deigo
San Deigo 200
Miami 400
Use arrow keys and +- keys to select ship types and city locations.
Press <Q>uit when done.

This year has seen a resurgence in computer wargames. Several good to excellent games have been released and there are more on the horizon. The most recent is **The Lost Admiral** by Quantum Quality Productions.

The Lost Admiral is an abstract naval strategy game that presents players with a tense series of contests more akin to chess than **Harpoon**. Make no mistake, **The Lost Admiral** is no simulation. Instead it is an excellent strategy game that is easily learned and played in a short evening. And like chess, **The Lost Admiral** emphasizes correct tactical play using a small number of pieces.

Players of **The Lost Admiral** take on the role of a former naval admiral exiled from his own country. A friend (who just happens to be president of another country) invites the former admiral to join his fleet. There the admiral can work his way back up to full status.

To do so, he must fight a number of scenarios and campaigns. His success in each of these will determine his rise in rank. Additionally, a difficulty level can be set so that victories in higher difficulty level battles net a greater rise in rank.

Navy lark

The heart of the game is the battles. Each one is fought on a large-scale map that varies from scenario to scenario. All maps contains some open sea, land masses, islands, potential gun emplacements, narrow channels and ports. There are other decorative features, but they do not play a part in the game.

On this map, players manoeuvre various ships. There are several types including battleships, cruisers, destroyers, carriers, subs, PT boats, transports, and armoured transports. Each of these has unique characteristics that govern their rate of movement, the amount of damage they can sustain, the damage they do to other ships, and other special abilities.

The objective in each battle is simple – score more victory points than the opponent. This is accomplished by controlling more ports than the other player. Victory points are accrued each turn, so fortunes can change dramatically through the course of a scenario.

Also, each scenario is balanced so that players generally have to win by a certain percentage over the other side. In fact, it is possible to 'lose' in total points, but win because the opponent failed to score a decisive victory.

Play is straightforward and everything is controlled by the mouse (with the keyboard always available as an alternative). At the beginning of each scenario, players build their starting fleets using an allocation of build points.

These ships are built at any of the various friendly ports. Players may also build guns which may be placed in open gun emplacement spaces during the game.

Taking turns

Once the fleet is built, play begins. A turn consists of the white side movement, combat resolution, red movement, combat resolution, and ship repairs.

Movement is simple, players select a unit, then click on each space that unit is to move to within the limits of its movement allowance (usually two, but up to four spaces). Movement stops when a space is entered that contains an enemy ship. Only two friendly units can occupy a space,

Designed by
Thurston Seafross and Bruce Williams Zaccagnino

Published by
QQP

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, VGA

Supports
Adlib sound board; keyboard and mouse

Players
1–2

so manoeuvring large fleets takes quite a bit of thought.

Movement is made even tenser by the limited intelligence in the game. Enemy ships are only spotted by being in the same space. This can be a painful method of gathering intelligence when a hapless PT boat stumbles on an enemy battleship.

Fortunately, there is one other form of intelligence.

Friendly carriers 'illuminate' all the spaces in a two-space radius around themselves. Thus, fleets will naturally form into a task force around a friendly carrier.

Combat is fought in each space that contains opposing ships. Combat results are resolved simultaneously, but for the sake of simplicity, the fire from the attacking side's ships are shown first.

The key to success in **The Lost Admiral** is understanding how each type of ship will fight against the other types.

For example, subs are invulnerable to battleships when submerged. But destroyers always kill submerged subs when the two fight. This is only one of the dozens of interactions in the game.

Would-be admirals will use these inter-relationships to good advantage.

Damage limitation

Another important feature of the combat is that the results are set. There is no randomness in the combat results.

Destroyers always do one point of damage to a battleship, while a battleship always does six points of damage to a destroyer.

The only variable in the equation is the presence or absence of carriers. Carriers that are adjacent to a combat space add one to the damage inflicted by all friendly ships.

So in the example above, a carrier adjacent to the battle that is on the destroyer's side will allow the destroyer to do two points of damage to the battleship.

In addition to the initial ship builds, players are also given the chance to augment their fleets during the game.

Ships are built at certain friendly ports using the combined resources from all friendly ports. These resource are materials, leadership, explosives, and engineering.

Each type of ship requires different combinations of these four resources, and each friendly port supplies different quantities of each. All of which adds another wrinkle to be considered in a player's strategic planning.

Controlling new ports requires the movement of a transport into the port. Transports are slow moving and vulnerable. Armoured transports are faster and slightly less vulnerable, but also more expensive.

Thus, players must manoeuvre so as to take ports while protecting the transports that will be used to control it.

Time to repair

Friendly ships based in controlled ports will have two points of damage repaired after each turn. And the stacking limits are waived for friendly ports (though note that only two friendly ships will fight in defence of the port).

At the end of a scenario, players are given the results via a set of graphs and a text report. The graphs resemble those in **Worlds At War** from Internecine and depict total victory points, victory point rates, and losses (in build points) throughout the game. The important information is contained in the text results wherein a player is informed of who won and by how much.

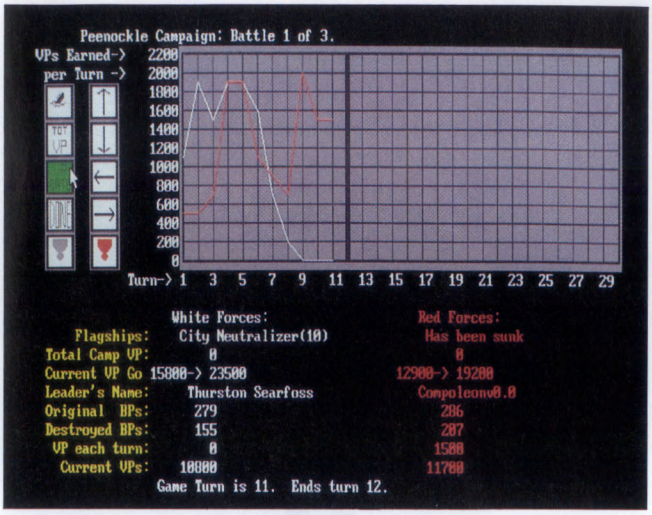
On another screen, players are told how many notches their officer won. Ten notches are required for advancement to a new rank, and well over a dozen ranks must be achieved to top out in the game. Typical scenarios award two to four notches depending on difficulty and the level of victory achieved.

Counting costs

There is little to complain about in **The Lost Admiral**. The game play is superb, and the interface is well done.

The manual explains the game adequately, but leaves out important information about ship building costs and times. It's possible to play without this information, but it would be useful to have it. On the other hand, the game is truly addictive. The AI is strong and unpredictable.

Players will be able to learn enough to beat the lower levels consistently, only to find the higher levels are another matter entirely.



There are 10 scenarios and several options for each. In addition, there are a half-dozen campaigns of two to three scenarios each. And random maps may be generated for players tired of the same old thing.

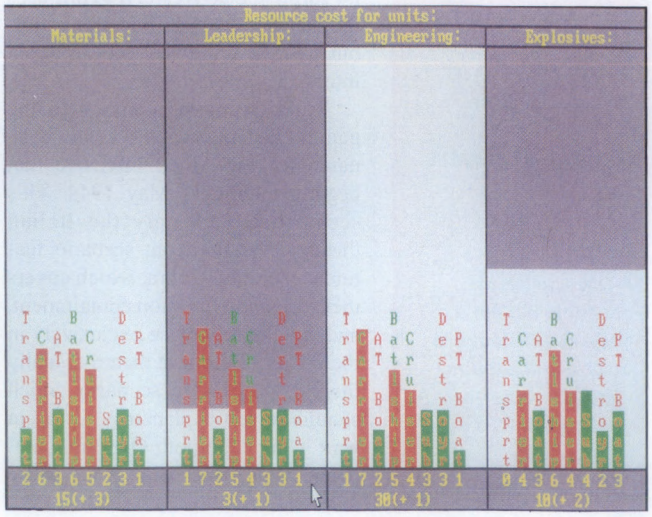
Combine these options with the very long career ladder and a player is unlikely quickly to exhaust the possibilities of **The Lost Admiral**.

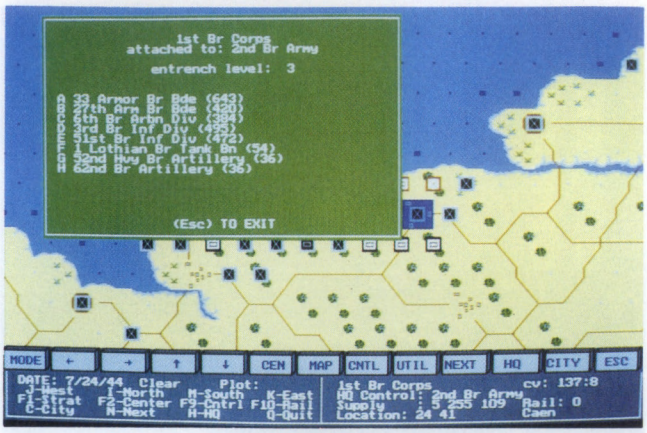
Right flavour

The Lost Admiral is a thinking person's game. There are no action elements and the graphics are functional rather than spectacular. Reality only flavours the game, so simulation purists should beware.

For anyone interested in a pure strategy game with a strong AI and long-term playability, I urge them to run out and find **The Lost Admiral** as soon as possible.

The bottom line is that the game is excellent, and a contender for the best of 1991. SP





Western Front

The Liberation of Europe 1944-1945

By Brian Walker

Designed by
Gary Grigsby

Published by
SSI

UK distributor
US Gold

Systems
IBM PC, no release details yet on Amiga version

PC graphics
EGA, VGA

Supports
Keyboard, mouse

Number of players
1–2

Notes
A Q & A article will appear in our next issue in an attempt to resolve some the manual's vagueness. A strategy article will appear in a future edition

SSI is something of anomaly among software houses. It's a company that was formed by gamers and is run by gamers to this day. Not only are its staff gamers, but *war*gamers. Normally this is a recipe for disaster, but SSI struck lucky by acquiring the rights to produce **AD&D** software.

The generally accepted wisdom is that the fantasy games are now what brings in the bucks and that wargames are produced only as a kind of hobby. Certainly the production of **Western Front**, SSI's latest wargame, adds weight to this theory.

Western Front is a strategic level game where the player takes on the formidable role of supreme commander of either the Allied or Axis forces. In addition to issuing orders to corps level units (and sub-units) for movement and combat, air missions may be directed, and production of war materials from the factories controlled.

The programming was done by the estimable Gary Grigsby of **War in Russia** and **Second Front** fame. Both are fine games, and it comes as no surprise that **Western Front** uses the same system as **Second Front**, but with an improved, mouse-based interface.

Three scenarios come with the game: Diadem, which was the code name for the Allied offensive that began in Italy, 11 May 1944. This scenario covers only the Italian theatre. The Breakout scenario features Operation Cobra, which covers the Normandy Invasion containment, and which takes place exclusively in the western European theatre. Finally there is the Bulge scenario which should be self-explanatory. Lying in wait is the mammoth Overlord campaign game which covers the entire map.

One of the major changes to the system used in **Second Front** is the addition of political points. These represent the cost of performing certain political actions. Players spend points if they elect to change HQ commanders, the cost being that of the political rating of the officer concerned.

Political points can be used by the Axis player to move troops assigned to inactive HQs, and to transfer units to parent HQs. The Allied player can use political points to use specific air formations. Each turn represents four days of real-time.

Unsightly bulge

The Bulge scenario is a slight disappointment in that it appears that the Allied commander simply has to follow history to secure a win, leaving little room for artistic manoeuvres.

The real meat of the game is in the Overlord scenario. With a playing time of 60–100 hours, this scenario deserves an article in its own right, and in fact will be discussed in a future issue of *Strategy Plus*.

To anyone who has played **Second Front** this game will be a doddle to learn. Newcomers will find the manual extremely hard going. It is a remarkably skimpy document to accompany a game of such complexity. There is no tutorial, no historical notes, and no hints. Even worse there is no map of any description. This is an incredible blunder and one that is compounded by the lack of city names on the on-screen map. This means that the only way to locate cities is scrolling around the screen using the x–y coordinates.

SSI's excuse for the absence of a map keeps changing. At first it was described as an 'oversight', but this subsequently became: 'As the playing area was small it was felt a map was unnecessary, plus, not having one helped cut costs.' In response to this I would say that no playing area depicting a map that encompasses most of Europe could be described as 'small'.

Second, this is a full-price game and users surely have a right to expect a complete production for their money, rather than one where important features have been pitched to cut costs. I suggested to SSI that if they provided us with a map then we'd be happy to print include it in the magazine. A reply is still awaited.

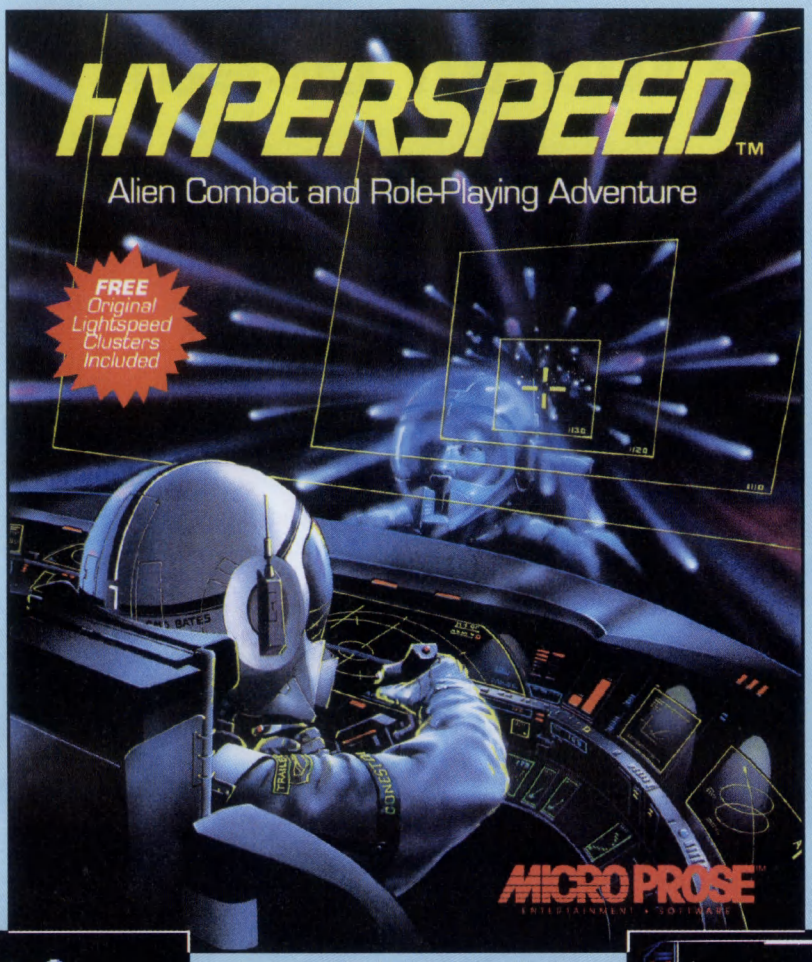
At the heart of this decision there appears to lie a belief within SSI that wargames are now just a 'hobby' and inherently unprofitable. Unfortunately, if the production of **Western Front** is anything to go by, then this is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

SSI ought to take a hard look at what Three-Sixty and newcomer QQP are doing (VGA graphics, sound board support, full colour maps, user friendly manuals). And their games are selling.

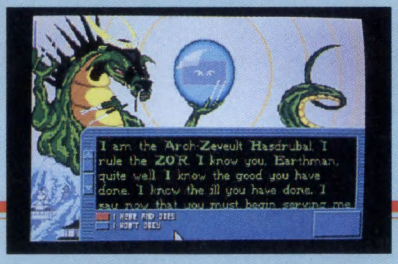
The poor documentation is all the more of a shame because **Western Front** is a potentially a great game (the Overlord scenario could be the Second World War program that wargamers have been waiting for).

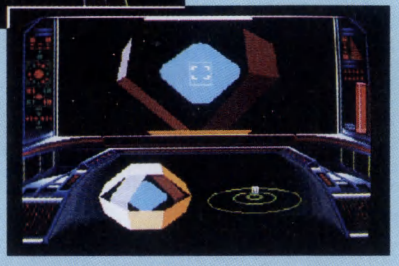
SSI is in danger of falling into the same trap that Avalon Hill did with its boardgames – that of creating a house style for their rules that only those resident in the house, plus a few rocket scientists, could understand. Gary Grigsby's Pacific game, which uses the same system as this, is due out early in the New Year. So please, guys, let us a have map (don't say the Pacific is too small), some historical notes, and a manual that is not a lesson in austerity. SP

"Aliens approaching... fightercraft launched."



IBM-PC screens shown.


I am the Arch-Zeveult Hasdrubal. I rule the ZOR. I know you, Earthman, quite well. I know the good you have done. I know the ill you have done. I



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The Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf

Battleset 4 for Harpoon

By Sandy Eisen

The fourth Battleset for **Harpoon** will cover the entire Indian Ocean and also the Persian Gulf.

Emphasis seems to be split between conflicts involving Iraq in the Gulf and those potentially involving the Indian Navy. Both of these topics are of great interest to contemporary wargamers and most **Harpoon** enthusiasts.

Three-Sixty's decision to change the subject of the fourth Battleset from that of the Western Pacific (originally planned) is to be applauded.

Progress on the new battleset is sufficiently advanced for me to be able to report on a preview of the forthcoming program. All is in order and from what I have seen I expect that this battleset will be the best-selling and most successful add-on to **Harpoon**.

The main reason for this is that conflict in the Persian Gulf has been less hypothetical than in the other regions covered by **Harpoon**. War is also more likely to reoccur.

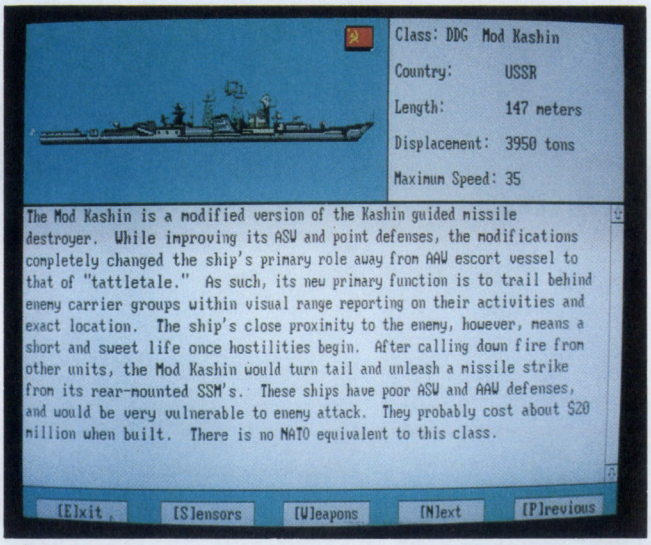
The designers of the new battleset have done a very thorough job in including most significant planes and vessels used by the nations in the Gulf.

There are so many new ships and aircraft in this battleset that it would be easy to get carried away and produce several long lists of units.

Iraq, India and Pakistan are covered in depth. Iran, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, Qatar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand are included.

In addition a good selection of US, USSR, British and French hardware is available.

The US, USSR and UK forces are better selections than those in **Battleset 3, The Mediterranean Conflict**.


Class: DDG Mod Kashin
Country: USSR
Length: 147 meters
Displacement: 3950 tons
Maximum Speed: 35
The Mod Kashin is a modified version of the Kashin guided missile destroyer. While improving its ASW and point defenses, the modifications completely changed the ship's primary role away from AAW escort vessel to that of "tattletale." As such, its new primary function is to trail behind enemy carrier groups within visual range reporting on their activities and exact location. The ship's close proximity to the enemy, however, means a short and sweet life once hostilities begin. After calling down fire from other units, the Mod Kashin would turn tail and unleash a missile strike from its rear-mounted SSM's. These ships have poor ASW and AAW defenses, and would be very vulnerable to enemy attack. They probably cost about $20 million when built. There is no NATO equivalent to this class.
[E]xit
[S]ensors
[W]eapons
[N]ext
[P]revious

New ships include the Admiral Kuznetsov (previously called the Tbilisi, Brezhnev and so on), and Charles de Gaulle as examples of new carriers.

Among these additions is most of the Indian navy (which now includes the former Royal Navy carrier Hermes – the UK sold it) and multiple flavours of fast attack craft for all the states listed above.

There seems to be a greater number of more new aircraft types in this batteleset than in previous ones. There are certainly too many to list fully.

New US planes include B-52s, Stealth Bombers and Super Cobra attack helicopters, while the Soviets now have Mig-31 Foxhounds and Yak-141 Freestyle carrier planes. A large number of older Soviet planes which are currently used by Iraq also conveniently appear.

The battleset includes 16 scenarios ranging from Iran v Iraq to several variants of the Third World War in the Indian Ocean. Quite a few scenarios cover regional conflicts involving India.

A 'historical' Desert Storm is included as well as some hypothetical variants. I cannot report on how the scenarios actually play as finished versions are not yet available.

The reasons for the US and USSR still fighting WW3 do strain my credibility a little, but because the battleset assumes that the Soviet Union still exists this is inevitable. For me the main attraction is the ability to study situations in the Gulf using the data in the battleset combined with the scenario editor.

In short, this new battleset looks to be a winner and one which takes the **Harpoon** system further than ever before.

I expect that it in time it will become the definitive battleset which most **Harpoon** players will choose as their favourite. SP

Availability

Harpoon Battleset 4 is expected to be released in January 1992

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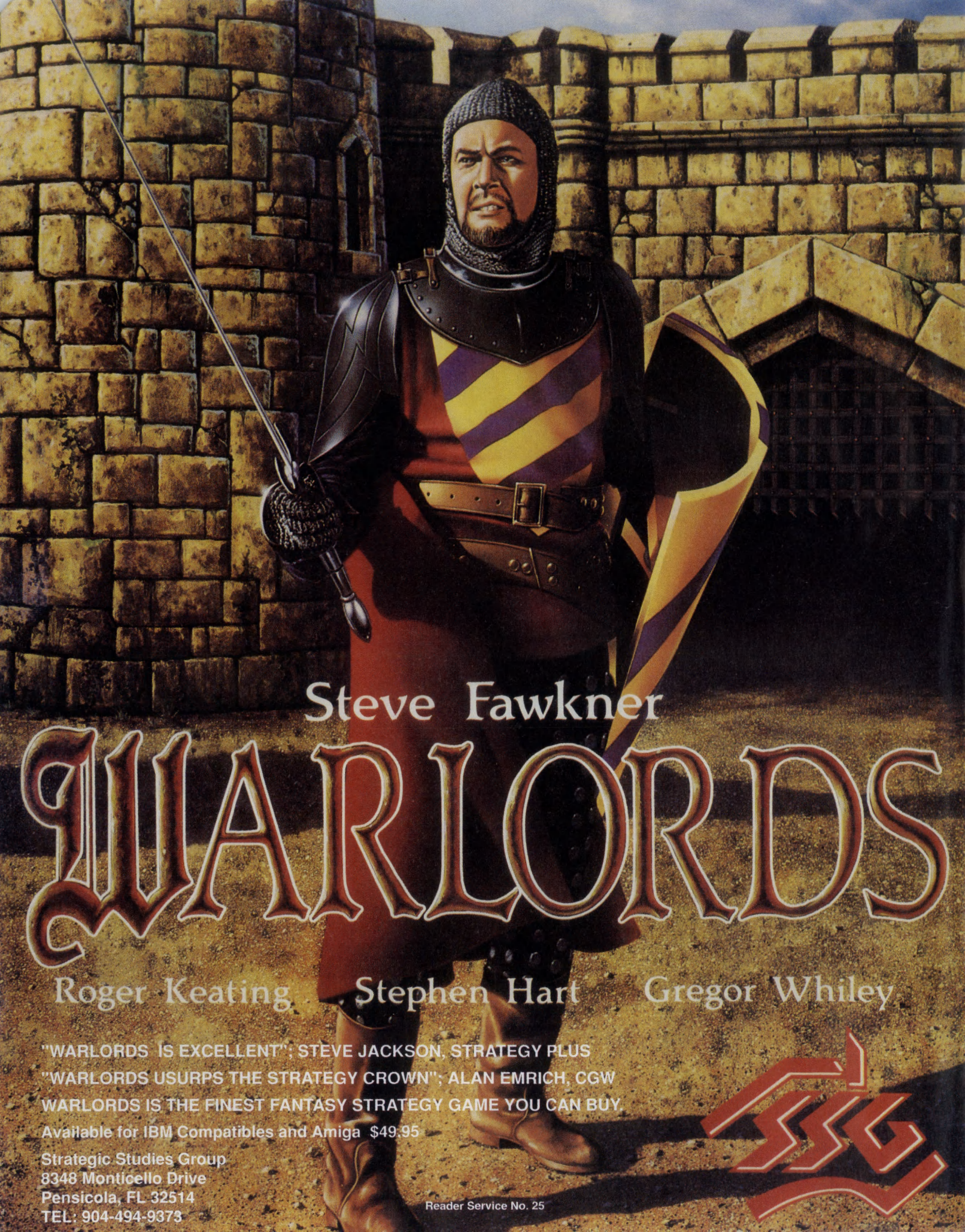
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Riders of Rohan

Horse play

By Ian Marsh

Once upon a time *The Hobbit* proved a valuable source for a fun and involving computer game that ran on a humble 48K Spectrum. Since then, translations of JRR Tolkien's works into board or computer games have been a pretty mixed bag. Certainly the newcomers may look pretty, but the game play isn't always up to scratch.

Riders of Rohan is no exception to the general level of mediocrity that Tolkien's classic fairy tale inspires in this cash-hungry world. Like a stereotypical pin-up girl, the game looks good, sounds rough in places, seems quite a bright young thing, but has the intellectual clout of a stuffed tortoise.

Unlike its predecessors, however, **Riders of Rohan** actually has a reasonable premise. Rather than concentrate on *The Lord of the Rings* from beginning to end, the game deals with one small and strategic part of the story: the mobilization of Rohan and the defeat of the wizard Saruman prior to the Rohirrim riding off to save Gondor from the hordes of Sauron.

On the face of it, the player has quite a challenge ahead of him. Saruman's forces vastly outnumber the available Rohirrim warriors at the start of the game; the surviving members of the Fellowship of the Ring are nowhere to be seen, and all he knows is that Merry and Pippin are destined to become hobbit-burgers on some vast and smelly orcish barbecue.

But the player's doom is forestalled by that miracle known as the plot of the book. Roughly follow the sequence of events outlined in *The Lord of the Rings* and it's difficult to go wrong. For lo, Merry and Pippin are intercepted by the Rohirrim, and after a short scuffle in which horse archers can manfully mow down 200 orcs without losing a man, provided their accompanying heavy cavalry are used as lures on the battlefield to keep the enemy out of hand-to-hand combat, the hobbits escape into Fangorn. And blow me down if the jolly little fellows don't run into Treebeard, key to the destruction of Saruman's fortress of Isengard.

The game continues in a like fashion: Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli sprint onto the map to be hauled off to Edoras by Eomer and the Rohirrim that have unknowingly released the hobbits. Gandalf reappears, for he is not dead and merely had a nasty fall in Moria. And surprise, surprise, old Grima Wormtongue is responsible for sapping King Theoden's strength, confining him to the Middle-earth equivalent of a bath chair.

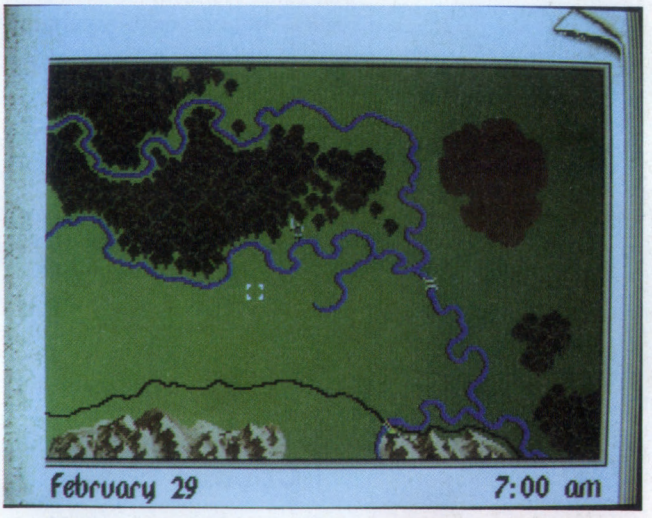
Success, however, is not the inevitable outcome of such foreknowledge: it will take a few goes to get the moves right. But the player has so few men at his disposal on the two-screen scrolling map of Rohan that it will not take long to learn the tricks. Worse still, the Rohirrim are grouped in only a few forces, giving the player precious little to do in the first place: at the beginning of the game it is easy to get bored, especially when reinforcements that do arrive cannot be controlled by the player.

Victory also depends on character interaction: leaders such as Theodred, Eomer, Aragorn and Grima must converse in order for mobilization to commence, and the responses the player chooses decide the outcome. Great chunks of Tolkien appear on screen as the player is dragged through the events of the book; the glorious portraits representing leaders have jaws that waggle up and down and eyes that blink just like the cut-out animated characters in the TV programme *Captain Pugwash* – although the Nordic appearance of the Rohirrim makes it more redolent of *Noggin the Nog*.

When battle occurs, the screen zooms in on the forces involved. Using the point and click interface, the player can review the troops and elects to fight or withdraw.

On the battlefield, matchstick figures represent the troops; clusters of figures represent strong units. Saruman's forces are usually clustered together in huge units; Rohan's are inevitably units of one or two figures, which makes co-ordinating a cavalry charge absolute murder in the battle's real-time environment. Units are ordered about by pointing at them with the cursor and clicking the mouse to display the available options – a neat idea in principle, but one that is flawed because the response to a click is too slow, and the hot zone to select a particular unit is absurdly small. In big battles there are too many units for the player easily to control.

Sometimes a bizarre arcade sequence will occur between leader characters: Legolas may get the chance to shoot arrows at the enemy; Gandalf gets a chance to use his magic; and the warriors get the chance for a sword-fight against a Dunlending or orcish chieftain. It's worth practising these skills as the result will influence the morale of friendly and enemy forces.



In essence, however, the appeal of the game is limited. The long periods of inaction and lack of control lead to boredom. In battle, the player has too much to do while the enemy reacts perfectly throughout its ranks.

All this creates the feeling that the game stacks the odds against the player through an unwieldy interface rather than clever artificial intelligence. SP

Published by
Mirrorsoft (UK)
Konami (US)

Designed by
Hank Howie, Adam Levesque, Phil Redmond

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
VGA, MCGA, EGA, Tandy

Supports
Mouse

Mega lo Mania

More power to your elbow

By John Scott

My usual procedure for reviewing a game used to involve drinking lots and lots of coffee while reading the manual from cover to cover (and sometimes even making notes!). Not any more. It's no fun to get a caffeine high, decide that this is going to be an utterly brilliant game which you can't wait to play, and then discover that the careless software company has sent a dud disk that won't load.

This is why the first thing I did with **Mega lo Mania** was to boot the disks – let's just see if the damn thing loads before messing about with the manual, I thought.

Four hours later I decided that it might be a good idea to stop playing, get some food (and coffee), and read the manual to see if I could find any tips on how to invent aircraft before that mega-bitch, the Scarlet Goddess, started bombing me from hers! But I digress....

Cosmic chess

The story behind **Mega lo Mania** is a familiar one. Every time a new planet with intelligent life is formed, a crowd of would-be gods gather around it, hoping to become its supreme being. This is really seriously bad news for the poor little mortals on the planet, as they become pawns in the hands of these cosmic entities, and discover just how mortal they really are.

Does this sound a little bit like **Populous** or **Powermonger**? I thought so. Even the screen display is somewhat similar, though graphically less stunning, and I have to admit that my first thought was that **Mega lo Mania** was going to be a second-rate version of these classics. It also lacks the bells and whistles included in **Powermonger** – you can't click on people and be told their name, address and telephone number; you can't click on the foliage and be told 'this is a tree', but let's face it, you don't need to.

Instead the human player chooses to be one of four gods involved in the current battle, controlling a race of people that slowly advance in weapon and defensive technologies while battling for the control of the 28 islands situated around the planet.

The first 27 are divided into groups of three; each such group is known as an epoch. After this comes the 28th island, and the 'Mother-of-Battles'.

The first epoch is set in 9500BC, and each successive epoch advances through ancient history, dark ages, industrial age, present day and so on, through to AD2001.

Along the way you will discover the dubious pleasures of inventing spears, catapults, muskets, jet fighters, nukes, flying saucers,and SDI lasers.

One of the things which made the game such a joy to play is that everything is carried out by a very intuitive point and click interface. Just to make it even more user friendly, an optional help mode will provide on-screen instructions about what the left and right mouse buttons will do if clicked at the current cursor location. This is mainly what made the game so easy to get into.

At the beginning of each game the player is given 100 men and a choice of which of the three islands in this epoch on which he wants to begin the battle.

It's not necessary to use all 100 troops in each epoch – in fact, it seems to be advisable not to.

In my first few epochs I was easily trashing the opposing cavemen, patriarchs, Romans, and Normans, but as we moved into the medieval and industrial eras I suddenly found out that my little worshippers were getting the stuffing well and truly knocked out of them!

A very frustrating time ensued, during which I became more and more convinced that the computer was cheating!

Rabbiting on

Damn it, the battle had just started and my 100 troops were being attacked by 250 of Oberon's men. Not even rabbits breed that fast! The penny dropped – my opponents had been carefully conserving their forces, and I was paying in spades for my earlier easy victories! I had to reboot and go back to square one.

Designed by
Jonathan Hare and Chris Yates

Published by
Mirrorsoft

Systems
Atari ST; PC version TBA

At present I've progressed as far as the nuclear age, and things are looking good. The battle for each island begins once the player positions his base tower in the sector of his choice. Then it is necessary to progress as fast as possible. This means first discovering how to make a weapon.

Tower of strength

Obviously the more men working on it, the sooner cry of eureka! will arrive. In the early stages, I found that one successful strategy was to work like crazy on discovering an offensive weapon (er... a stone), then immediately run in and attack the enemy's tower.

Once a player's tower is destroyed, it's all over for him, and I found that my opponents seemed to be working on developing defensive weapons (er... sticks), but I managed to hit them before they made the discovery.

This was a stroke of luck, because I later discovered how easily a few well-equipped defenders can wipe out a whole attacking army! If a sector progresses quickly enough in its scientific exploration, it is possible for it to jump forward by a tech level or two.

This can be hilarious or grim, depending on whether you are controlling the biplanes on the bombing run, or the unfortunate medieval infantry wishing they were some place else.

Before long things begin to become more complex. Metals are tremendously useful in weapons technology, but they are not to be found just lying around, you have to dig for them. So now the choices are: How many miners? How many inventors? How many troops? And that's only the beginning. A hole in the ground is all right for novice miners, but eventually it will be vital to build a proper deep mine.

Then come the decisions about which metals are most important for the inventions. This isn't so difficult, for once a blueprint has been created by your inventors, it can be examined to determine the necessary 'ingredients'. On the other hand, mining a sufficient quantity of one of the other metals might create the possibility of a new invention. The choice, as they say, is yours.

Mega lo Mania eventually becomes moderately complex, but as the complexity builds slowly from the first simple epochs, the player is more than ready for each new innovation as it comes.

For example, in the epoch I am playing at present, my immediate priorities on each island are to build a mine, get miners working, build a factory and start production (yes, a jet plane is a bit harder to construct than a catapult), all the while keeping the inventors hard at it, and building a laboratory as soon as it becomes feasible. All this, while trying to ensure that all buildings are adequately protected (and repaired if necessary), and sending out colonists to set up new settlements.

I still don't think that the graphics are quite up to the **Powermonger** standard, but they're not bad and they do the job.

Having said that, I must just mention that I really liked the nuclear strike graphical sequence. After all that tedious messing around with sticks and stones, it comes as a sudden reminder just how very much more lethal one well placed nuke can be!

This is another good reason to make sure that you have a colony or two – it's a baaad idea to have all your eggs in one basket with a nuclear holocaust just around the corner.

As far as sound goes, **Mega lo Mania** is special. I can't think of any game where the comic possibilities of digitized speech have been so well thought out.

For example, it is possible to ask for an alliance with another player, or for him to request alliance with the human player.

Mincing machine

Usually my wife is less than amused by the buzzes and beeps of computer games, but she likes the sound of **Mega lo Mania**. Indeed, she continually asks me to request alliance with Oberon, the (somewhat effeminate?) ruler of the yellow people, just so she can laugh at his mincing reply: 'Nooo, I don't think so....'

My pet hate in the soundtrack is when that megabitch Scarlet says 'Ha! Pathetic!' in a voice so full of withering scorn that any male listening to it can't help but feel that if he ever met her... well... he'd have to get them sewn on again. And then there's what sounds suspiciously like Prince Charles screaming 'It's all over!' as the game is lost.

Mega lo Mania is an excellent little game, but I'm sure that it will be most remembered for this use of speech.

As a bizarre bonus the game also provided my all time favourite manual misprint. Just in case it's fixed by the time the game is released, I'll quote it now: 'This defensive nuke can be placed in a turret in one of your sectors and will automatically look out for incoming nudes'! A search method which could lead to serious sunburns.

Mega lo Mania provided me with the most fun I've had on my Amiga for ages. Unhesitatingly recommended. SP

Megafortress

Flight of the Old Dog

By Steven Wartofsky

We're finally beginning to get there: flight simulations are being put into fascinating contexts with clear yet complex dilemmas and goals. **Megafortress** stands out because it pushes those things usually considered the centre of a flight simulation to the periphery and focuses on the systems management problems inherent in running a stealth-oriented EB-52 bomber.

This approach results, among other things, in an interface that, like **Tracon II**, is realistic in ways that no other flight simulation could approach. The various stations feel quite plausible on the computer screen, because in essence that's what they are.

Dare we mention that **Megafortress** is by Artech Digital Entertainment, the firm that brought us **Das Boot** and **Blue Max**? There's no question that the company has come a long way in this design, and fulfilled many of the design premises that were rather problematic in its earlier work. Here is a place where the concept of crewed stations pays off, where the integration of strategic and tactical mapping with radar and instruments displays is plausible, and where the simulation needn't stand or fall on the quality of its 3D animation and flight modelling.

That's not to say the 3D flight work is in any way rudimentary. **Megafortress** provides a very nice external camera (easy to get into and out of from within the main simulation) for that extra thrill of watching yourself do neat stuff while you're doing it. The camera can be positioned in any one of four views, and can be adjusted in both horizontal and vertical planes from each of them. The only thing missing is a replay and save option.

The out-the-cockpit views are quite sufficient as well; 3D representations of terrain, targets and runways are all quite detailed, and even on slower machines animate quite smoothly owing to the relatively small size of the cockpit window. As with most current designs, assume a fast 286 is the minimum required for decent solid-fill animation.

But I digress. The real fascination in **Megafortress** lies with the co-pilot, electronic warfare, offensive weapons and navigation stations. These are where the player is focused at least 80% of the time in the simulation.

The co-pilot station functions as the in-plane environment control system. During pleasant times, this means duties such as turning interior and exterior lights on and off (sounds silly? imagine an EB-52 on a night mission with its nav and anti-collision lights beaming off into the darkness), turning the batteries on before starting up engines, controlling cabin pressure, and managing the IFF/transponder communications system (which also serves as copy-protection).

During less pleasant times, when the EB-52 has suffered damage of one sort or another, the co-pilot station becomes absolutely crucial. Now things like bypassing damaged main hydraulic systems with back-up pumps, restarting or reshunting generators and other electrical systems, re-routing fuel systems from damaged to functioning engines, and so on become essential to the flight. The co-pilot gets pretty busy during attacks!

The navigator's station is the most important in many ways. The plane is guided through the waypoints of each mission from here, through continuous route planning and plotting. During evasive manoeuvres it becomes the navigator's responsibility to set up temporary waypoints. The first stages of setting up the bombing runs are initiated from here as well.

Megafortress also contains a wonderful database of information on all the elements present in the map for each mission; the navigator can call up details on everything from base, radar and missile site names and locations to info on borders, cities, and even main highway routes! This becomes quite useful during the serious missions, when it's important to know exactly what the EB-52 is flying over (and near). Civilian and military elements are accessed independently, for clarity's sake.

The nav station includes a number of radar and steerable low-light television modes (STV), along with the electro-optical viewing system (EVS), all of which are used in various circumstances to maintain a high level of situational awareness. The terrain avoidance computer (TAC) can also be adjusted from this station.

The electronic warfare station becomes a major point of attention in

Megafortress, especially when the EB-52 is at work avoiding detection. This is where all the stealth technology built into the bomber is managed, along with the more familiar defensive air combat systems such as chaff, flares and passive radar.

Two radar screens present themselves simultaneously from this post: the smallest one serves as part of the signal, infra-red and communications jamming equipment, the largest one as back-up and signal frequency detector.

Passive radar tracking from this station indicates when enemy radars are searching or targeting the EB-52; it also provides launch and proximity warnings for inbound missiles.

Jamming today

Individual radars are identified on the small scope and can be chosen for jamming. As a particular enemy radar is selected, its searching/tracking signal is displayed on the larger scope. It can then be jammed either automatically or manually (manual jamming is useful when dealing with only one or two radars, more than that and automatic jamming becomes a must). Infra-red and radio can also be jammed using similar (yet simpler) techniques.

The rear-looking infra-red detector panel is the final important defence system present at the EW station; it provides the means to set chaff and flare emissions on automatic when necessary, and provides early warning for incoming heat-generating threats.

The offensive weapons station is where the player finally gets the chance to strike back. The EVS functions in four modes here: scan, camera, attack and control. The first two produce no emissions from the EB-52; scan is slaved to the plane's passive radar systems, and provides info on enemy objects which themselves produce radar emissions. The camera mode is similarly slaved to the STV systems, but from the OW station can be used to target opponents for weapons delivery. There is also a mode which accesses missile cameras, when weapons such as the AGM-84E are used.

The attack mode is the most dangerous, yet the most simple; it turns on active radar, which detects targets within the set range almost instantaneously. At the same time, however, it broadcasts a search radar signal which is easy to detect by enemy fighters or radar stations, turning the stealthy EB-52 into a beacon in the sky.

Finally, control mode simply provides the basic statistics on selected ordnance for range evaluation. Some weapons can be launched directly from this mode when necessary.

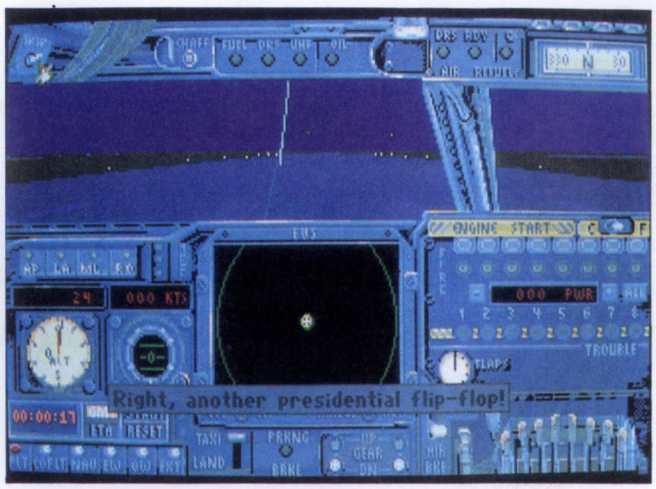
Aside from the EVS, the OW station is where the player is in charge of bomb control. Bomb bay doors can be run manually or automatically (when open, they increase the EB-52's radar signature, of course), and must be handled in accordance with ordnance needs. Should the plane become heavily damaged, a jettison control is also included to lower the risk of the plane's blowing itself up with its own weapons.

That completes the tour. Oh, a quick mention of the pilot station, of course; this is control central as far as monitoring the overall situation is concerned, but except during take-offs, landings and evasive manoeuvres, it is primarily a passive post. The player sits in the pilot seat only when a global assessment of mission status or plane damage is necessary. All the other stations are quickly accessible from here and from each other via the interphone panel, which flashes a button on specific stations when immediate attention is needed there.

Mouse mastery

How does this all work? By mouse, primarily. The mouse interface in **Megafortress** is a stroke of true genius. It makes what could otherwise become a dauntingly complex arrangement simplicity itself. All active components and controls are simply clicked on to control; in some cases, the mouse button is held down for analogue control (to increase or decrease engine power, for instance). In a very few cases, the right button is used to call up alternate functions. All moved switches and activated systems provide visual feedback upon access. The whole arrangement ends up feeling quite natural very quickly.

Megafortress includes a plethora of missions, all of which are hard-wired. There are 16 Red Flag training missions, 14 Persian Gulf missions, and finally, the ultimate challenge, a mission based on Dale Brown's novel, *Flight of the Old Dog* (Brown was influential in the overall design, and a paperback copy of the novel is included with the simulation, a must-read either before or during play). This might not sound like a lot compared with, say, all those available for **F-15 Strike Eagle II** or **A-10 Tank Killer** (version 1.5) but these are all long, complex missions, any one of which would count for three missions in the usual air combat simulation.



In other words, there's plenty on offer here. Nevertheless, it would be great if future mission disks were planned for this simulation. It is varied enough to provide real, long-term fascination.

Megafortress comes on 5.25in disks, and takes up about 5Mb of hard disk space. It is possible to play it from a floppy-based IBM, but this will require at least one 1.2Mb drive and a special order placed with Three-Sixty. Sound Blaster sound is supported, but no Roland. This is just as well, because the sound effects are primarily digitized samples which the Sound Blaster does more easily. The simulation makes use of RAM beyond the 640k limit if available, and runs only in VGA mode. A mouse is virtually indispensable for play; keyboard equivalents of all functions are available, but they are difficult to remember when in the thick of things.

If you enjoy the more action-oriented flight simulations, don't pass by **Megafortress**. It will provide a taste of how much more can be done with the genre.

If you're a strategy game fan, take a look at this one to see how the focus of a bomber simulation can inspire a whole new way of thinking about strategic game play. This is just the start of something really big. SP

Published by
Three-Sixty Pacific

UK distributor
Mindscape

Designed by
Jon Correll, Rick Banks, Paul Butler and Dale Brown

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
VGA

Supports
Keyboard and mouse; Sound Blaster and Adlib sound boards

Notes
Megafortress may not run properly with some systems using QEMM (version 6.0 in particular seems to induce some hang-ups). Three-Sixty is working on the problem. The software should run properly from a boot disk with QEMM commands removed.

The Harpoon Battlebook

The official strategy and tactics guide

By Sandy Eisen

Written by
James DeGoey

Published by
Prima

Distributed by
Electronic Arts

Notes
Can be ordered in the UK, price £12.95, only direct from Electronic Arts, tel 0753 549442 and ask for direct sales

Harpoon is accepted by most wargamers as the best serious computer wargame available. If the topic of contemporary air and naval combat is of interest to you then there is no excuse for not owning and playing **Harpoon**.

Even if you prefer other subjects, you should still play **Harpoon** a few times in order to appreciate how well a computer game can handle commands, mapping and limited intelligence. Unfortunately **Harpoon** is also an example of the limitations of artificial intelligence.

Manual labour

Harpoon is a complex game and learning to play it can take time. Even the new revised manual is not ideal. Undoubtedly the best method is to be taught by someone who can already play. Now, however, there is an alternative: read the book.

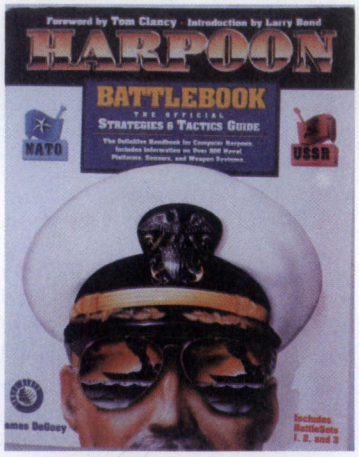
The Harpoon Battlebook, subtitled The Official Strategy and Tactics Guide for Computer Harpoon, is in part a form of an extended manual. As such it can be recommended to novices and old hands alike.

This 300-page paperback is rather tackily described as a 'secrets of the game series' book, but is clearly written and laid out with numerous tables and screen shots.

The book covers the first three battlesets and includes a huge amount of information.

Some of this information is available within **Harpoon** and the battlesets, but there is no easy way of printing it out, nor of integrating the information contained in separate battlesets. The final third of the book includes a series of data annexes which present most of the information present in **Harpoon** in a useful format. Some of the information included in the book is not available through the user interface of **Harpoon**.

An example of this would be the characteristics of sensors and missiles defending land bases. Throughout the book fascinating tit-bits of information are presented on how the



program handles various topics: did you know that each aircraft flying at very low altitude has about a 1% chance of crashing into the ground due to pilot error during each 30-second period? F-111 Aardvarks and F/A-18 Hornets, however, are excluded from this because of their terrain-following radars.

The main text of the book includes an excellent chapter giving the background story of **Harpoon** and covering both the manual game and the computer game.

A second chapter describes basic and advanced tactics. Here it is still interesting to read about what most experienced players will already have discovered for themselves.

I found the chapter on using the scenario editor less useful. This was mainly because the author concentrates on recreating situations from a book about WW3 that I have never heard of. The fault is not mine because the book is not due to be published until 1992!

Dawn chorus

Quite a bit of space is taken up by a walk-through of Dawn Patrol, the first and simplest scenario in battleset 1. I found this of very little interest, but I suppose a novice might consider it gripping and enlightening stuff.

The middle third of the book contains several chapters describing platforms, sensors and weapon systems.

The commentary is entertaining and interesting and some of the tabulated data is useful. But I did find the assessment of ships and planes with 'star-ratings' in several categories somewhat bizarre and imprecise.

In several areas I found myself wishing that the information was presented differently. I expect that to satisfy all readers this book would need to be published together with a computer disk of data which the reader could organize and print out as he needed.

A few times I have started to input the information from **Harpoon** into a spreadsheet.

Sadly I have always found the task of data entry so tedious that I have ended up playing a game instead. The battlebook also contains a foreword by Tom Clancy and an introduction by Larry Bond, both of which are of interest.

Clear speaking

The author is to be congratulated for his interrogation of the **Harpoon** development team, and the timely production of a clear text.

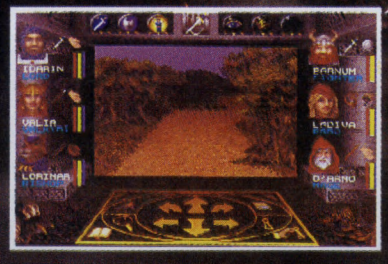
I did find, though, that I wanted to know still more about the development of the program, the people who worked on it, and what they are working on now.

Despite the aforementioned reservations, the *Harpoon Battlebook* can be recommended as indispensable to anyone with more than a passing interest in **Harpoon**. SP

Wizardry I

A Fantasy Role-Playing Simulation by D.W. Bradley

CRUSADERS *of the* DARK SAVANT



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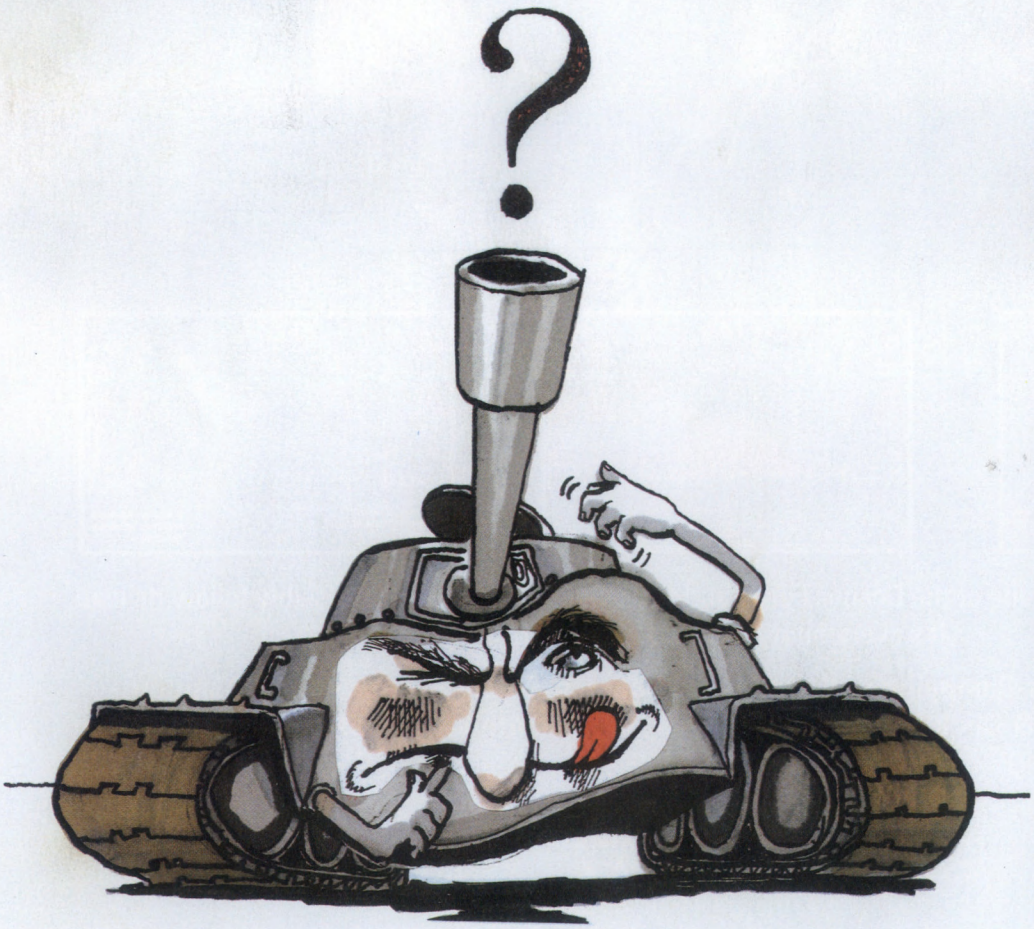
THE THINK TANK

Armada 2525: Stuart Mitchell plots a course



Armada 2525 is a new game from Interstel in the tradition of **Reach for the Stars**. It presents players with the challenging task of grabbing as much of the nearby galaxy as possible in the face of five hostile races that are trying to do the same thing.

Colonies must be managed and grown, new colonies founded, enemy ships attacked and defeated, new technologies researched... It's enough to drive a galactic ruler to drink, especially when each turn's victory points totals indicate that the race for galactic domination is being lost.

Players who are suffering at the hands of their enemies can take comfort from the following hints. General strategies are outlined with some thoughts on each of the major areas of the game: exploration, economic development, research, and combat.

Exploration

One of the less salutary features of **Armada 2525** is its map. The map is strictly two-dimensional with artificial boundaries around all four edges. There is no variability in the placement of stars. Each star has only one planet and the type of planet is largely determined by the type of star. This limits the extent to which the game can be replayed, but makes it easier to plan exploration routes.

The key to early exploration is to look for Terran or large habitable planets. In the early game, player cannot affect the habitability of planets. Thus hostile or dead planets are simply liabilities. Obviously, this means a player should concentrate on searching yellow stars, with red giants and red dwarfs also likely to yield decent prospects.

Another corollary to the fixed map is that certain positions have an advantage over others. In general, I feel the Kapyducci and the Xspectrada have the best starting positions. Corner positions generally offer less room for immediate growth, and the distribution of stars is uneven.

Economic development

The key to understanding economic development is seeing that population is the most direct contributor to the economy. This means that the em-

phasis in economic growth should first be placed on population growth. Again, find those Terran planets and colonize them. In the early going, be sure to spend all your resources on factories for your base planet. This will nearly double economic capacity. But be sure to leave at least 10 population points free of factory duty so that a colony can be started.

In general, I avoid the use of work units to build up new colonies. It is cheaper and more effective to simply put more population on the planet. Also, I use older planets to create missiles and have them transported to newer colonies. The emphasis in new colonies should be in building up the factories and (when technology allows) in building up the habitability of a planet. In the early going, it can be worth expanding the base planet and colonies that are fully developed.

Research

In many ways, research is the heart of **Armada 2525**. It is research that makes possible the building of new ship types. Research allows players to improve their planets and makes viable the colonization of less desirable planets. The only problem with research is its expense. This expense, however, is borne by each player, so the cost can be considered to be nominal.

The first turn should be spent building up the player's economic base. But in subsequent turns, all leftover build points should be spent on new research centres. I also believe that a player should research all areas more or less equally. The various areas are too intertwined to allow any one to be neglected without it holding up overall progress. The simplest strategy is to research in all areas to prevent any lagging.

The key point is determining how many research centres to build. Initially, the only limit is available build points, but after turn four or five, players will need to think about building a fleet. I tend to gamble at this stage and keep building research centres, keeping a close eye on the movement of the other players. The disadvantage of early fleet build-up is that only very inferior ships can be built. Research will begin to allow better ships to be built soon, so holding off can be beneficial.

There is no set number of research centres needed to reach a given tech level in any category. Instead, the number of research centres is multiplied by a random number (0.5 to 1.5) and then accumulated. When the total reaches a set number, the tech level is increased.

To reach level one, eight points must be accumulated. Level two requires double that number (or 16). Level three is double that and so on. Thus, it would take an average of eight turns to reach level one technology with only a single research centre. Clearly it pays to have as many research centres as possible. But remember, once level six is

reached, no further research is possible.

One last note on research. It is important to colonize a neutron star as soon as an enclosed base is available. Neutron stars provide neutronium which allows ships constructed there to be particularly effective in combat. This is one area where the computer players seemed deficient, so grab that neutronium to ensure an edge in battle.

Combat

Combat is fairly straightforward. In general players should concentrate their forces into one or two task forces. Carriers should be built as soon as possible. It is tempting to buy lots of small, cheap ships, but in the long run this is costly. The 100 ship limit in **Armada 2525** mandates that the ships built be large and effective.

Remember also that only certain types of ships can attack ground targets. And some ships are much more effective in ground attacks than others. So a task force will need to contain a mix of carriers and ground attack ships to be most effective. Also note the relative movement rates of each type of ship. It is tedious, but it may be necessary to split task forces to deal with a crisis as expeditiously as possible. This is particularly true in later turns when very fast ships like the Supertitan become available.

Look for enemy colonies close to your own colonies. Often the computer player will create a single colonist colony just to extend its range into your territory. Eradicate this colony and the threat is pushed back several hexes. This same tactic can be used in return, though I find it of dubious value, preferring slowly to establish viable colonies to extend my range. Planetary defence is important, but ultimately the best defence is a good offence.

Be sure to fortify outlying planets with the best missiles available. Force shields should be bought at first opportunity. Young colonies should receive missiles via transport so that their fledgling economies can focus on economic growth.

As I've said, an aggressive offence is the best defence. Find the enemy fleet, then meet it with superior forces. If this is done over an enemy planet, the victorious fleet may wish to remain there and pick off reinforcements.

Finally, I prefer to eradicate enemy colonies. It is all too easy for conquered colonies to be liberated. And they contribute little to the economy because their production is halved and their economic structure is generally gutted during the bombardment. Of course, this can result in feuds, but if players are smart, they will have focused their efforts on one enemy and will be able to cope.

One last piece of advice, if a deal has been made plan to keep to it. Broken deals only generate trouble. It is best to not make a deal with treachery in mind.

Conclusion

Armada 2525 is a solid game of interstellar exploration and growth. Players should aggressively seek out the best planets for colonization and focus their efforts on those planets. A strong emphasis should be placed on research. Fleet assets should be concentrated and manoeuvred en masse. And population growth should always be kept as high as possible. Good luck in the conquest of the galaxy! SP

ARMADA 2525

Published by
Interstel

Systems
IBM PC

Notes
UK availability limited to imports at present

Wing Commander 2

Vengeance of the Kilrathi and the Speech Accessory Pack

By Marcus L Rowland

Produced by
Chris Roberts

Published by
Origin

UK distributor
Mindscape

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, VGA, MCGA

Supports
Roland, Adlib and Sound Blaster sound boards; joystick, mouse and keyboard

Wing Commander 2 is the long awaited sequel to **Wing Commander** and its two secret mission disks. For anyone who has been on Mars for the past two years, **WC** is a huge space fighter combat game, based on a long war between the Terran Confederation and the Kilrathi Empire, with the outcome of each combat determining the next step of a complex cinematic plot. **WC2** improves the improves the graphics considerably, and gets rid of a lot of bugs, but unfortunately there are several prices to be paid for the improvements.

The game begins 10 years after **Wing Commander** ends. The TCS Tigers Claw has been destroyed in a surprise attack by Kilrathi stealth fighters. Only our hero has seen the stealth fighters, since the Kilrathi destroyed the production facility to stop it falling into rebel hands, and he's generally considered to be the coward who let the Kilrathi destroy the carrier. Now the stealth fighters are starting to appear again, and proving that they exist is a major goal in the game.

For new players the game begins with a long cinematic sequence explaining this background, making effective use of speech synthesis (Sound Blaster only) and 256-colour low-resolution VGA/MCGA graphics, but spoiled by sluggish animation (on my 16MHz 386). Characters have slow lip movements that are horribly unconvincing, and move at a stately pace, with little jerks as the screen updates. I've seen much faster animation in other programs, and this aspect is extremely disappointing.

The introduction leads to entry of name and call sign, with an option to load characters from the earlier game.

This option wouldn't work when I tried it. Next comes a view of a utilitarian chamber containing a computer, airlock entrance, and two other doors, a replacement for the barracks in **Wing Commander**. There's no mirror to check your medals, and no access to a flight trainer.

Loading options

The computer can save and load up to eight missions, showing the number of missions flown and the number of kills for each saved game. A nice feature is an option to add a note describing saved games, but this is unfortunately limited to thirty or so letters in a peculiarly unreadable typeface. The current game is saved automatically after each mission, with saved games giving an option to go back to earlier stages.

Plot continuity deals with the character's life and other events, and is much more diverse than the ship's bar in **Wing Commander**. So far I've seen a murder, a secret intelligence debriefing, a poker game, and encounters in barracks and bars. An implausible number of survivors from the Tiger's Claw appear. These sequences aren't interactive. So far none of them have used speech synthesis, even with the accessory pack added. All are infuriatingly slow.

The missions door leads to combat missions. Typically these begin with a briefing, but it isn't always the formal briefing seen in **Wing Commander**; sometimes it's just a casual conversation on the flight deck. Sometimes the 'briefing' continues after take-off, adding more narrative sequences such as conversations with bases and wing-men.

Combat is fast and furious, and I'd guess that most of Origin's programming expertise has gone into making it smooth and flicker-free, and improving detailing at all ranges. The flight behaviour of craft remains as implausible as ever; they can make impossibly sharp manoeuvres, shed speed instantly, and stay in close contact with the enemy when they should really be flashing apart at 2000kps.

All the combat graphics are enhanced; all the new craft have bigger cockpit canopies, giving a greatly improved view of the action, and the controls look much more real, some-

times confusingly so. Missiles and energy weapons are more detailed, again a little implausibly; I wouldn't expect to be able to see a missile zipping by at 1500kps, let alone count the rivets on it. With the speech accessory added wingmen reply to their orders, and the Kilrathi snarl their threats and battle cries. There isn't any noticeable speed penalty with speech, and intercom video (a frequent cause of problems in **Wing Commander**) doesn't seem to slow the game at all. Controls are unchanged, with extra features added as needed.

In the soup

Military hardware has changed considerably in ten years. The only familiar Terran fighter is an upgraded Rapier; particle cannon replace neutron guns for added range, and chaff pods improve missile defence. This isn't the sweet killer it was, since the Kilrathi have souped up their own craft considerably. Three other fighters and a bomber are available at different stages.

The Ferret is a small light patrol fighter, intended for anti-piracy and anti-smuggling operations, armed with two mass drivers. It has a huge bubble canopy, and omits some of the instruments found in other ships. This is roughly equivalent to a fast basic trainer – a lot of fun to fly, but a death trap if the big bad guys are encountered.

The Epee is a little larger and slower, and adds missiles and an improved tracking system that makes deflection shooting easier. Armour is worse than the Ferret.

The Sabre is the largest fighter, carrying four guns, eight missiles, a rear turret, and chaff pods. I've yet to try one, so I can't say how they behave, but the specification looks good; loads of armour, improved tracking, and reasonable manoeuvrability and speed.

The Broadsword is a huge jump-capable bomber with three turrets, torpedoes, missiles, and lots of guns. It's a pig to fly in combat, with rotten manoeuvrability and speed, but it's the only craft that can take out capital ships, since both sides now use phase shields that block normal fighter weapons completely.

The advertising for this game makes frequent references to the turrets; when they're used the ship flies under automatic pilot, avoiding collisions. I didn't like this feature at all; without the complexities of flying the ship, taking pot-shots from a turret soon becomes very boring. There also seems to be a bug which makes all the turrets fire continuously if you press the joystick button while the game is paused. I'd be happier if the turrets were fully automated, with 'friend or foe' systems to aim them, or used some sort of split screen aiming (little TV sets in the cockpit?) to tell the pilot when to press the button. I'll be interested to see how well the Broadsword fares against a capital ship, but so far I haven't encountered one. The turrets would be most useful on the run-up to a shipping strike, which is the one moment when you don't want to go onto autopilot, so I have grave doubts about their usefulness.

There are some new ways to damage your fighter, the deadliest being loss of radar; when that happens you suddenly realize how hard it is to cover a 360-degree 3D field of view by eye alone.

One major bug of **Wing Commander** is even worse in the new game; joystick control of afterburners is implemented very poorly, even on the 33MHz machine I tried when previewing the game, and rarely works if there's more than one enemy fighter in a combat.

A nice feature is a 'replay mission' option, used if your character is killed or ejects. This lets you bypass the funeral or reprimand that would normally follow, and go straight back to the start of the mission after the briefing.

Overall I'm very impressed with the combat sections of this game, but disappointed by the narrative passages. Origin says that these sequences were created using **Autodesk Animator**; I've run **Autodesk** on my computer, and the results were much faster, even with higher resolution.

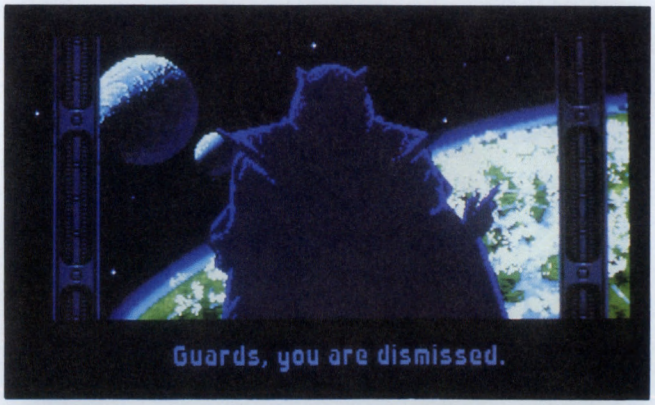
There are long delays while the computer seems to meditate before loading the next sequence; this is most notable if a pilot is killed, because there's an interminable pause before the cockpit interior is shown. Somewhere this part of the programming has gone badly wrong. Even so, the faults can be lived with, and shouldn't disguise the fact that the core of this game is an extremely playable simulation. The snag is that many PCs will be unable to run it.

Wing Commander 2 is extraordinarily big, even compared with its predecessor. In all I loaded 19 720k disks and spent several hours tinkering with CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT files before everything worked properly. Take a careful look at the sidebar text and the game box before you buy; everything shown is the minimum needed, and the game performs much better with more memory and faster processors.

Well spoken

The speech accessory pack is a must, if you have the right hardware; it's excellent, and seems to impose no penalties apart from disk space. Some of the accents are unbelievable, especially those of the Kilrathi. As yet there aren't versions of this pack for other speech products, such as Covox cards. Special operations packs are mentioned in the documentation but not yet available. There is no indication of size, however, I've got 10–15Mb of hard disk space with a 'reserved for Special Operations' file on it.

After this I think that I'll probably leave **Strike Commander** until I get a new computer; a Cray should be about right.... SP



Installation notes

MSDOS 5 is recommended because MSDOS 4 consumes too much RAM. Hard disk requirements: 12Mb with files compressed to minimize space, 15Mb with files expanded to minimize delays, add 5Mb for speech synthesis (Sound Blaster only). Add-on missions may eventually need more megabytes. There is no copy protection.

Installation takes at least an hour for the game. Speech installation takes about 15 minutes. De-fragmenting the hard disk is strongly recommended after either installation. For unknown reasons the game seemed to work much better with VGA memory upgraded to 512k.

Dusk of the Gods

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Reader Service No. 50

Shadow Sorcerer

I left my heart in Pax Tharkas

By Philip Murphy

Shadow Sorcerer is an official **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons** action role-play adventure computer game. It's based on the rules of **AD&D** and features part of the epic Dragonlance story. Designed for newcomers to computer adventure gaming, it is a recommended first step for novices but that shouldn't put anyone off; it's still a lot of fun!

The game follows an episode from the original story in which the destinies of the Companions of the Lance (characters featured throughout the Dragonlance cycle) are controlled. The companions have just rescued 500 refugees from the city of Pax Tharkas and must now find a safe place for them as far away as possible from the Dragonarmies. The problem is, where? South, away from Pax Tharkas is obvious, but apart from that...

Surprisingly, **Shadow Sorcerer** has quite a complex resource management aspect for a novice's game. Apart from fighting off various monsters and the pursuing Draconians, the areas ahead often need to be scouted to ensure that they are safe for the refugees to enter. This takes time – a valuable commodity when being chased!

The refugees also need to be fed and encouraged to follow the companions; as they get hungry, they stop moving, start travelling in a different direction and begin to splinter. Some (or all) might even decide that life in Pax Tharkas wasn't all that bad after all, and head straight back there. This is where interaction with the refugees' council comes into play. Its five leaders all have different views on what should be done and how, so a subtle combination of pleading, threatening and reasoning is required to keep the refugees together and moving with the companions.

Fine management

The companions also need to be managed. A party of four may be chosen from any 16 but that choice is difficult owing to various factors, including the fact that there is only two healers and two magic-users. Inter-character love, hate and dislike also needs to be considered. The default four characters are fine but when one or more is injured beyond use (or, horror of horrors, killed) which replacements should be called upon? And since before being 'promoted', the replacements travel with the refugees, where exactly are they – with the main group or one of the splinters? Is that really Sturm Brightblade leading 98 refugees back to Pax Tharkas?

The interface is particularly friendly because it is 100% point and click. Although this leads to some confusion at times of stress (I found myself madly clicking both buttons at times) I do believe this to be a lot better than having to use mouse and keyboard. The game is played on both the strategic (world map) and tactical (area map) levels.

Sprite fantastic

At the strategic level, the party and various groups of refugees are represented as icons as they explore the land (although the program automatically kicks into tactical mode if a hex containing anything interesting is entered).

On the tactical level, the companions and other creatures are represented as individual sprites which may be ordered to move, attack, pick up items, and so on. The option to switch between modes is there at all times except during combat, when tactical is compulsory.

During combat, which is conducted in real time, it is possible individually to control each of the four companions, although this requires some serious dexterity and speed. Better to click two or three of them into 'automatic' mode, from whence they will follow default orders which may be melee, use ranged weapon, cast spells or flee. I felt this aspect of the game to be a weakness; it often lead me into clicking all four companions into auto and letting the computer sort things out. Granted, that's my fault as much as the program's, but I slowly but surely lost all feel for the combat system. That *never* occurred with the Forgotten Realms series. Perhaps a real-time combat system for novices wasn't such a good idea.

Apart from the mad search across the wilderness, the companions do have (random?) encounters with various creatures (spiders, hobgoblins, trolls, various undead, and so on) and there are dungeons and the like to explore. A journal at the end of the rule book contains various snippets of information which is slowly disseminated to the companions throughout the adventure.

When the quest has been finished, the player's score is assessed, thus providing some (not much) replay value. Success is evaluated on two platforms: number of monsters slaughtered/obstacles conquered and the number of refugees left alive.

Shadow Sorcerer is a reasonable first step into adventure gaming for a novice. Chasing the refugees about may prove a little frustrating; the lack of serious mental challenges is disappointing and the combat system is questionable. All in all though, it must get a qualified thumbs up. SP

Storyboard by
Paul Cockburn

Programmed by
Clipper Software

Published by
US Gold

US distributor
SSI

Systems
IBM PC, ST, Amiga (1Mb)

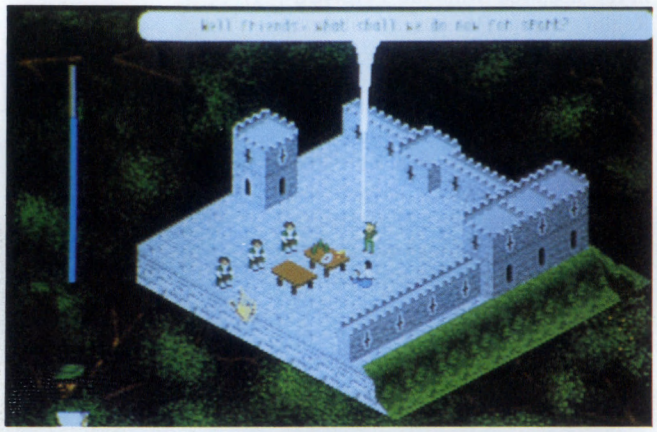
PC graphics
CGA, EGA, VGA

Supports
Roland and Adlib sound boards; keyboard, mouse and joystick

The Adventures of Robin Hood

Thwack!

By Theo Clarke



Designed by
Steve Grand and Ian Saunter

Published by
Millennium

US distributor
TBA

Systems
IBM PC, Amiga and ST

PC graphics
EGA, VGA

Supports
Adlib sound board; mouse required

Robin Hood never had this trouble, I thought as I hunted lost arrows in the King's forest this morning. Mind you, it never rains in Robin's Sherwood, and I was soaked through at the time. I almost wish that I lived in the world of Millennium's contribution to the Robin revival. It might be a bit wearing living in a small isometric universe where orthogonal movement is a way of life, but at least the sun shines and the birds twitter melodiously for Adlib card owners – PC speakers emit inoffensive tweets.

There is no link between the *Prince of Thieves* movie and this game from Millennium, but the design of the box and the opening graphic are strongly influenced by the Costner posters. Costner wields a distinctive longbow and nocks his arrows backwards, and so does Robin the Millennium clone.

The game opens with Robin being evicted from Loxley Castle by the Sheriff of Nottingham. Sitting on the grass outside his erstwhile family home, Robin says 'I'm depressed'. So, indeed, am I. The isometric game view was a fine novelty when Bullfrog applied it to **Populous** but it is irritating to have to examine Sherwood Forest through a diamond-shaped keyhole. Even when Robin obtains a magic ball that acts as a navigator-cum-spy-in-the-sky we are obliged to watch him plod from one small square of the map to the next on his way to the chosen destination.

Millennium's Robin is not the brightest star when it comes to navigation. He is reasonably competent when heading for the vague destinations specified through the crystal ball, but he can be bovine when asked to move to a nearby location behind some obstacle on the current isometric view.

Robin can be moved around the tiny area surrounding his castle in four different ways. As well as using arrow keys to control direction moves, destinations can be indicated on the crystal ball's map or by pointing directly at a spot on the isometric view. Robin can also follow any person or beast that he chooses.

Not all of the effects of the icons are obvious or clear-cut – the archery icon fires an arrow in the direction that Robin is facing. This is akin to the fixed cannon on the 19th century ships of the line – Robin has to wait for targets to cross his line of fire.

The heart of this game is about Robin's attempt to maximize his status as a hero; it is not enough for him to selfishly regain his home and kill his enemy – he must impress the peasants too. This is simplified by recruiting three Merry Men but there is more to this than walking up to each character and clicking a recruit icon; each Merry Man has a different trigger that inspires their loyalty and there is a substantial advantage to be gained from knowing the legends.

Repeated conversations with Marian develop another subplot – she will fall in love with Robin if he is sufficiently heroic.

The manual gives lots of background information about Robin Hood but is very light on the game mechanics. The implication is that it will be fun for the player to discover how the game works rather than be given instructions. 'Here is a bow, Robin. Figure it out yourself.' This approach is deeply frustrating since it is impossible to save more than one game position; thus, each game can start only from the last saved position.

Once the mechanics were grasped there seemed to be little depth to the game as Robin chased back and forth across the forest recruiting men and setting them tasks determined by the game.

The game may appeal to people who want more flexibility than that offered by the linear approach of most adventures but the inability to control Robin's speech is unlikely to satisfy their desire to escape such constraints. Experienced adventurers will find the puzzles trivial and novices may have trouble understanding what is required of them, given the near absence of instructions. The only people who will be really interested will be designers who can see the potential locked within the game and can exploit it.

Millennium may have hit the target with this game but it missed the gold by a long way. SP

Robin Hood stoned

A Mr Edward McDonald, described as a 'lute-playing minstrel', was found not guilty at Nottingham Crown Court recently of using a stave to assault a youth who, he claimed, had been stoning a statue of Robin Hood at Nottingham Castle.

McDonald, who appeared in court wearing green tights and a tapestry jerkin, said on hearing the verdict: 'I'm sure Little John was not averse to strangling a few schoolboys.'

In *The Magic Candle*, 1989's role-playing game of the year, you saved the lands of Deruvia from the foul archdemon Dreax! But that triumph is past!

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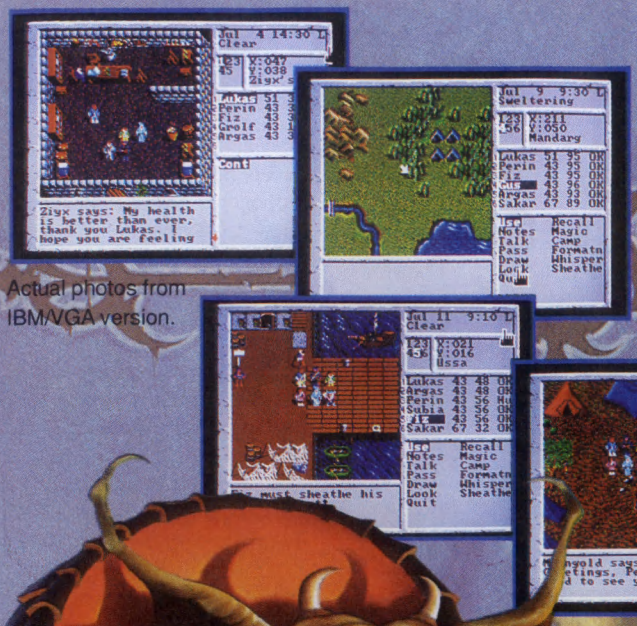

Actual photos from IBM/VGA version.

The Magic Candle II

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Reader Service No. 10

Pools of Darkness

A question of character

By Jamie Thomson

Pools of Darkness is the fourth in SSI's **Forgotten Realms Advanced Dungeons and Dragons** CRPG series. Interestingly, it returns you to the town of Phlan, the nub of the scenario that was the first ever **AD&D** CRPG of this type – **Pools of Radiance**. Fortunately, the whole of Phlan is reduced to a smoking crater very early in the development of the plot – I cannot thank the designers enough for this kind mercy!

Published by SSI
SSI

Designed by
SSI special projects team

UK distributor
US Gold

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
CGA, EGA, VGA

Supports
Adlib sound board

The game system -combat, character generation and so on, is virtually identical to all the others (**Champions of Krynn**, Whatnots of Krynn, thingummies of Krynn and the rest). Consequently, the next few paragraphs will give a brief description of how this tried and tested system works for those newcomers to the wonderful world of **AD&D**. For the old hands, skipping to the bits describing what makes **Pools of Darkness** different from the others would be advisable. (Especially as I will be quoting verbatim from previous reviews anyway! Same system, same review, right? *(But not the same pay – Ed.)*

The game system, although virtually unchanged, is an excellent rendition of **AD&D** to a computer format, using a menu system – both in terms of the rule system and in making it as user friendly as an unwieldy game like **D&D** could be on a computer. A choice of most **D&D** character classes – cleric, magic-user, thief, paladin, fighter, and ranger is provided. There can be up to six characters in the party with two slots for non-player character hirelings. Selecting a character brings up a menu to find out his stats, the items owned, money and so on, including his status. Characters stats can be modified to use a character generated in the paper-and-pencil version of the game.

Combats follow the on-screen tactical battle-map mode, with characters and monsters moving and acting in turn, based on dexterity. The map is divided into squares (but not marked on the map) for movement and combat with a character or monster icon filling one square. When its a characters turn a number of commands may be input – move, attack, cast spell, use item and so on.

Character icons may be modified quite comprehensively, including what weapon he carries, what clothes, the colours and even whether he (or she, for dwarfs) has a beard. Movement in the underworld or a city is via a 3D view in a section of the screen, showing walls, doors, arches and so on. It's not bad graphically, with varying 'wall-types' according to which dungeon is being visited.

Those familiar with **AD&D** will have no trouble getting into the game – others will have to read the well-written rule book.

Pools of Darkness is strikingly different from all of the other games of this type – it is for character levels 11 to way above 25. This means the whole thrust of the plot is raised to a plateau of hitherto unknown power levels (and correspondingly hideous opponents for the player's motley crew to do battle with). I've been waiting for SSI to come up with the next stage of **AD&D** – the high level stuff, and I have to say the company has done an excellent job.

There are a number of new spells for mighty characters to hurl at the insidious foe (including two mage spells, firetouch and ironskin, that are not explained in the manual) and the party begins at about the 13th level, fully kitted out with magic weapons.

Naturally, there is a host of suitably powerful monsters never before encountered, mostly minions of the evil god Bane. Even the old timers are of the dragon or beholder variety. This makes for a tougher and so far, more exciting 'combat path' as the plot unfolds.

Phlan fight

The storyline is of earth shaking proportions. Bane, the god of vile excrescence and general nastiness, appears in the skies above Phlan and sends his three servants, Kalistes, Tanetal and Gothmenes to lord it over the mortal realm. In the process he blasts a few of the cities in the area including Phlan (thank you, lord of darkness, thank you!), causing numberless deaths and much suffering. The player's job is to save the world from his minions, although whether an encounter with Bane is going to be on the cards I don't know. It's possible – **AD&D** is the only game system to give stats for its gods, thus enabling characters to take them on.

The scope of the game seems even larger than before with the addition of inter-planar travel, to the elemental planes and perhaps others. Other changes tinker with the RPG engine and are improvements, access to cash while purchasing goods has been streamlined, for instance. Graphically, it is a vast improvement on previous versions, with more variety and of higher quality.

During combat, NPC hirelings can now be controlled by the player, so they won't rush around like headless chickens getting in the way and acting like mindless computer-controlled automatons.

In essence, good plot, good graphics and good game play. The higher level stuff is a breath of fresh air. SP

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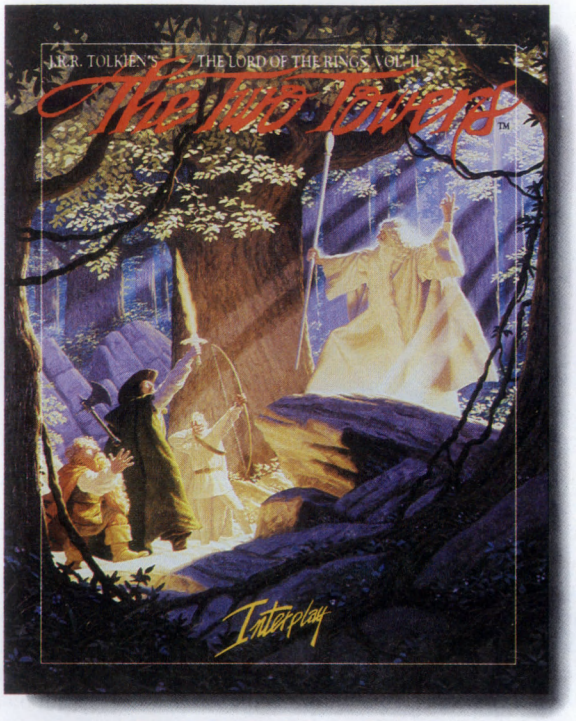

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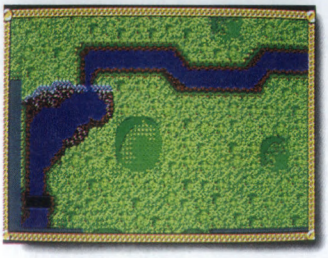

MS-DOS Screens Pictured.

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MAMA SEZ...

Mapping, anyone?

Plain brown mappers go high-tech, says Big Bad Mama

Bruce Schlickbernd of Interplay declares: 'I hate mapping with a purple passion!' Whereas Sir-Tech's Brenda Garno says: 'If there is one thing that I enjoy, it's mapping. Even when I'm on a trip, I find I think in terms of **Wizardry** mapping.'

And one of my CRPG friends says: 'I map. I like it. I enjoy it even more if the designer takes enough care to come up with interesting or clever layouts. I don't mind spinners but I absolutely despise teleports that give no warning whatsoever, not even a blink of the screen.

'I think a game that requires mapping should also include a coordinate system for easy reference. Of course, there's nothing more frustrating than mapping half a dungeon and discovering that you started too close to one edge of the paper and are now rapidly running out of room in that direction.'

Mama sez... if I gotta map it, the game had better be worth the trouble!

Last month, under the thread title 'Mapping, anyone?' Mama asked the on-line denizens of gaming (Gamers Forum, Compuserve) if they liked or disliked mapping as part of gaming. The response was immediate and vehement. Most of the gang lined up in Bruce's corner, but a large number of responses reflected Brenda's and my friend's feelings too. I guess Mama is somewhere in the middle, accepting mapping with a sort of fuchsia futility.

Like many who claim to hate mapping, I find myself paying a great deal of attention to it. Sometimes this attention is required because the game must be mapped and other times it is voluntary, just because I am curious as to how the various segments of the game connect.

Frequently, my response to the need to map is to wait until some generous soul uploads a set of maps to the section 9 library on the Gamers' Forum. Then I download them and play the game a second time to see what I have missed.

Game mapping can be as casual as a list of locations and their relationship to a standard point: 10 north of start, 2 north then 4 east then dig; or face north and move. This is the way to go in small games or in small segments of large games that feature automapping.

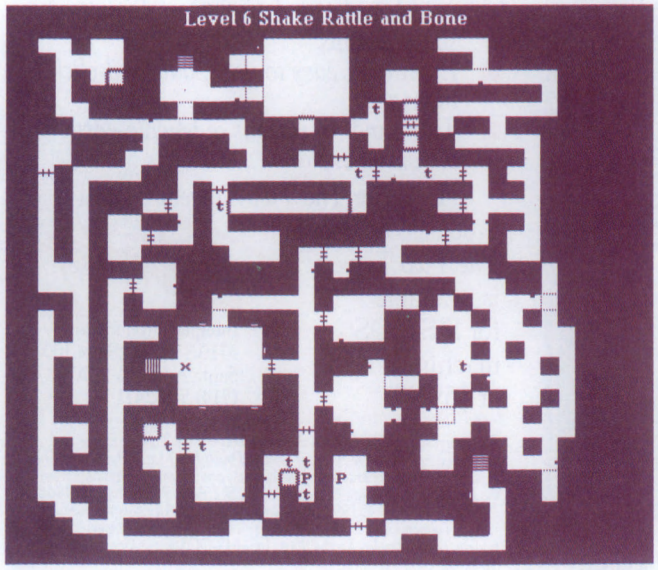


Image of dungeon level 6 of Dungeon Master, created by Mike McCormick. This is one of a set from Compuserve

Casual mapping is not the way to go in location-dependent games such as **Dungeon Master** or **Eye of the Beholder** which feature many levels of maze-like dungeons with secret doors and hidden passages.

This explains the need for Mama's mapping centre which is replete with a thick pad of engineering paper (the grid is on the reverse side of the paper), a dozen sharpened pencils, several really sharp red, blue and green pencils, a yellow highlighter for unusual locations, a pink highlighter for dangerous locations and a green highlighter for safe locations within dangerous areas.

Forging ahead

Also available is a stack of transparencies and four different colour marker pens. These are very useful when mapping a layered maze such as the mines in **Bane of the Cosmic Forge**. The main level is drawn on the engineering paper, and the other levels on the transparencies which can then be overlaid on the main level. This system is handy when looking for the correct stairs. A soap eraser and a large trash bucket complete the essentials.

Mapping reserves include extra large graph paper sheets for mega-games like **Wizardry**, multi-column notepaper, and a large batch of printouts from my spreadsheet program which contain 16x16 grids of rows and columns with a single dot to mark each of the corners. These printouts are perfect for all of the SSI **AD&D** gold box games and for **Might and Magic I** and **II**. The same grids work

for both sets of games except for the location of the 0,0 coordinate which is the lower left corner in the MM games and the upper left corner in the SSI games.

In the high-tech mapping category, any paint or draw program can be used to develop maps. A very popular program for this purpose is **Deluxe Paint II** by Electronic Arts, which allows the creation of 'brushes' to represent the various types of terrain and features in the area being drawn. The ability of a program to permit brush development takes a lot of the tedium out of mapping.

Cartographer's Scribe, from Syzygy Simulations, goes way beyond the capabilities of the paint and draw programs. **Scribe** adds the ability to jump from a map segment to another map and to place notes in each map segment on all maps. It also offers two-dimensional and three-dimensional mapping.

The key to real dungeon mapping success is the development of a map symbol system. It is essential to use consistent symbols to indicate gates, doors, archways, traps, stairs, false walls, buttons, levers, locked gates and doors, pits, pressure plates, spinners and traps. When indicating stairs it is also wise to note whether they go up or down. I do this with arrows pointing north for up, south for down, regardless of the direction of the steps. Some cartographers use different colours for up and down and point the arrows in the direction of party travel. Whatever method you use, be consistent.

Consistency also needs to be applied to note taking. One workable solution to organized notes is to use numbers to indicate non-player character (NPC) interactions and reuse the same number throughout the game whenever your party meets that particular NPC. Letters can be used to indicate the location of clues, items or special features within a particular map segment, and the alphabet can be restarted for the next segment.

In games that offer automapping, a TSR screen grab program can be very useful for capturing the general layout of an area. The symbol keys and alphanumeric notes will still be important but a lot of the dirty work will be out of the way. Different games implement automapping in many different ways. Some use high-level spells, some use a combination of small segment and full area maps, some allow map view at anytime during game play, and others allow the maps only in certain areas. A great number of games have on-screen co-ordinates, which greatly facilitate player mapping, and some even offer on-screen compass readings.

The first game I played that had automaps was **Bard's Tale III** and the party had to be up to a certain level before some areas could be viewed using a high level spell. **Might and Magic II** allowed entire map segments to be viewed if the party partook of the Fountain of Clairvoyance or if a party member could cast the mapping spells – Eagle's Eye for outdoors, Wizard's Eye for all areas. **Might and Magic II** also offers true automapping in the form of tiles that become permanently visible once

they have been visited by the party when one or more of the characters have learned the proper skills, such as cartography for automap, mountaineering for access to rough terrain, and pathfinder skills for access to forest areas.

The SSI gold box **AD&D** games all offer an area view, which is like a rough graph paper map showing only corridors and walls. Drawn maps are a must for the SSI games mainly because of the lack of detail in the area view, and because not all sections of the games permit an area view.

Detailed mapping is not usually necessary in games that feature an overhead three-dimensional view of the game world, such as **Ultima, Martian Dreams, Lord of the Rings,** and Megatraveller 2. When mapping this type of game, a hexagonal grid rather than the traditional square grid should be used because motion is usually possible in all directions and multiple terrains are contiguous in many locations.

Just as in the dungeon maps, a standardized key is important in terrain mapping. Use the same colour or pattern all the time to indicate each feature such as mountains, rivers, forests, trails, obstacles, urban areas, and teleports. The 2D hex grid option in **Scribe** is ideal for this application.

Guiding hand

Freehand mapping, girl guide style, is also an option for any of these games, but works best when step-by-step detail is not needed. Ah, yes, the old step-by-step routine is tedious but necessary in some games. Mama always keeps two versions of a game going with separate saves for mapping expeditions and real game play adventures.

In the mapping version, I just use a sort of disposable party. Designating the first location as 0,0 (unless otherwise indicated by the game) I mark that point on the graph paper then turn the party in all directions, drawing what they see in each direction. Then I save and step in one direction and repeat the process. I use standard graphic coordinates with an x and y axis. Movements north are in a +y direction, south is -y, east is +x and west is -x. If diagonal movement needs to be indicated on the map, a dotted line can be used. In a complicated situation, hexagons can be used to represent coordinate points, with 0,0 being the central hexagon and having the party 'look' in all eight directions with each step.

Although most hint books contain spoiler information, the maps in those books are usually excellent and a highly recommended Mama's helper (second only to tying a string on Matilda and turning her loose in the system).

Finally, several combination walk-through and map sets are available that truly simplify mapping and game play.

Two excellent examples of this combination are the walk-through and map sets to be found in The Electronic Gamer Library, Compuserve, for **Bane of the Cosmic Forge** and **Eye of the Beholder**. A terrific set of **Dungeon Master** maps by Mike McCormick can be found in library 9 of the same forum, and the lovely map of the **Lord of the Rings** Forest Maze by Chris Ducharme is also available in library 9.

Time to roll up the string and see where Matilda has gone... happy mapping! SP

CARTOGRAPHER'S SCRIBE

Published by

Syzygy Simulations

Systems

Runs on IBM compatible systems; hard drive and EGA or VGA recommended; mouse or keyboard; colour

Notes

Shareware, costs $25. In addition to the map-making version, there is also viewer version. The viewer is freeware for personal, non-commercial use and is available for download in library 1 (General/Help) of the Compuserve Gamers Forum, as the file VIEWER.SCR

Contact

Syzygy Simulations, PO Box 2634,Reston, VA 22090, USA

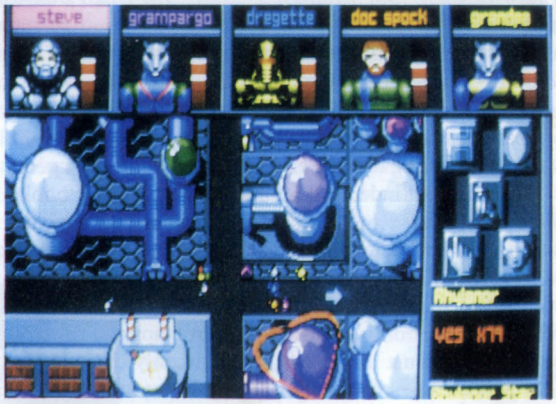
SAVING GRACES

Greg Ellsworth supplies hints for Megatraveller 2

Megatraveller 2 is a very large game with many possible quests besides that of saving Rhylanor from the Ancient slime. Different combinations of characters with varied skills may find other paths to the financial success necessary to visit the many locations and gather the required objects.

The default characters supplied with the game are sufficiently equipped for any player who is overwhelmed by the character generator, as I was. One of the Vargr characters already has a Far Trader as one of his retirement benefits; it's a valuable asset that can save much playing time. Even if custom characters are desired, it may be advisable to keep the Vargr in the party or at least transfer his registration papers to another character.

For those players that wish to work their way up to a Scout or Far Trader, credits may be earned by bounty hunting, strategic trading, pirating other space vehicles and completing the numerous side missions. Of course, a substantial reward is earned for saving even a small part of Rhylanor, Cr500 000 for each tenth of a per cent of the land mass.



If rolling custom characters, the player has many choices of skills to train in. The list of skills *not* required to complete the game is included in the manual, but that still leaves many to choose from.

Each character should try to get some training in brawling, large or small blade, laser weapons and vacc suit. At least two of the party should train in stealth to level 3 or greater to have a chance of sneaking weapons past customs.

If a character uses an item he is not skilled with for a period of time, he may acquire that skill at an initial level of 0. Of course, the party should have members trained in pilot, navigator, engineer, medical and turret weapons for use during space flight and combat. Other useful skills are interrogation, interview, persuasion, and trading, although there are ways to get information and money if no one has been trained in these areas.

The main quest of the game, saving Rhylanor from the toxic slime, involves locating and exploring 11 Ancient sites to collect clues, devices to slow the spread of the slime, and a full set of 36 coyns.

The party initially receives six coyns, a locator, and Vlen Backett's diary when they meet his grandson Trow Backett in Rhylanor Startown. The locator as well as a few other Ancient devices require an Ancient battery to work, and when the locator is used it will show a green light when the party is on a planet with an Ancient site. Vlen Backett's diary indicates 10 possible Ancient sites by the first letter only, and the party is given additional leads – an Ice Palace on Labylon, the locator was discovered on Inthe, and that Clieve Senchur may have a coyn.

The beginning of the trail is found by referencing the library computer and looking up Ancient Collector's Society. This displays the names of seven Ancient experts, including Beckett Senchur who lives in the city Arden, planet Efate. This person will direct the characters to an Ancient site where many more clues will be found, and the party should follow up these. While the party is pursuing these leads it should simultaneously try to untangle the Megacorp conspiracy, because one of the Ancient sites can not be entered until this mystery is solved and the party confronts the culprit.

As the characters travel between systems, they should speak to everyone in each city, discovering the side-plots and minor quests that they can pursue when convenient.

Always identify an NPC before talking to him: criminals will attack immediately upon termination of a conversation and some are quite heavily armed.

Save the game before trying to take on one of these guys! Put all characters in reserve mode, target the NPC and attack first. This may cause the loss of any weapons that were confiscated when passing through customs on planets with high law levels, but the reward and loot are usually worth it.

Before visiting a new planet it is wise to consult one of the information sources to discover useful facts. The party can access the computers of the Traveller's Aid Society if a character has a membership, or the Naval and the Imperial Scout Base databases if they have a character who is a retired Naval officer or Imperial Scout.

Be certain that each character has at least one empty slot in his inventory. In the current version of the game, an item that is given to a character by an NPC or purchased from a merchant will be lost for ever if that character's inventory is full. The person usually will not respond again.

If this happens when buying passes to certain interdicted worlds or receiving special objects this can make the main story impossible to complete, requiring the player to restore a previous saved game. SP

Published by
Paragon Software Corporation (US)
Empire Strategy (UK)

Story
Marc Miller

Designed by
Glenn Dill, FJ Lennon, Marc Miller

Systems
IBM PC; Amiga and ST to follow in February 1992

PC graphics
MCGA (expanded memory required for full zoom), VGA, EGA, Tandy

Supports
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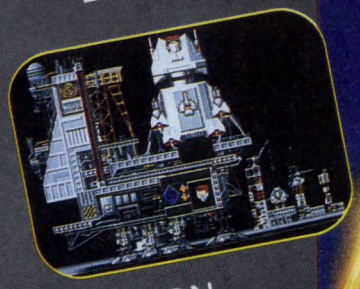
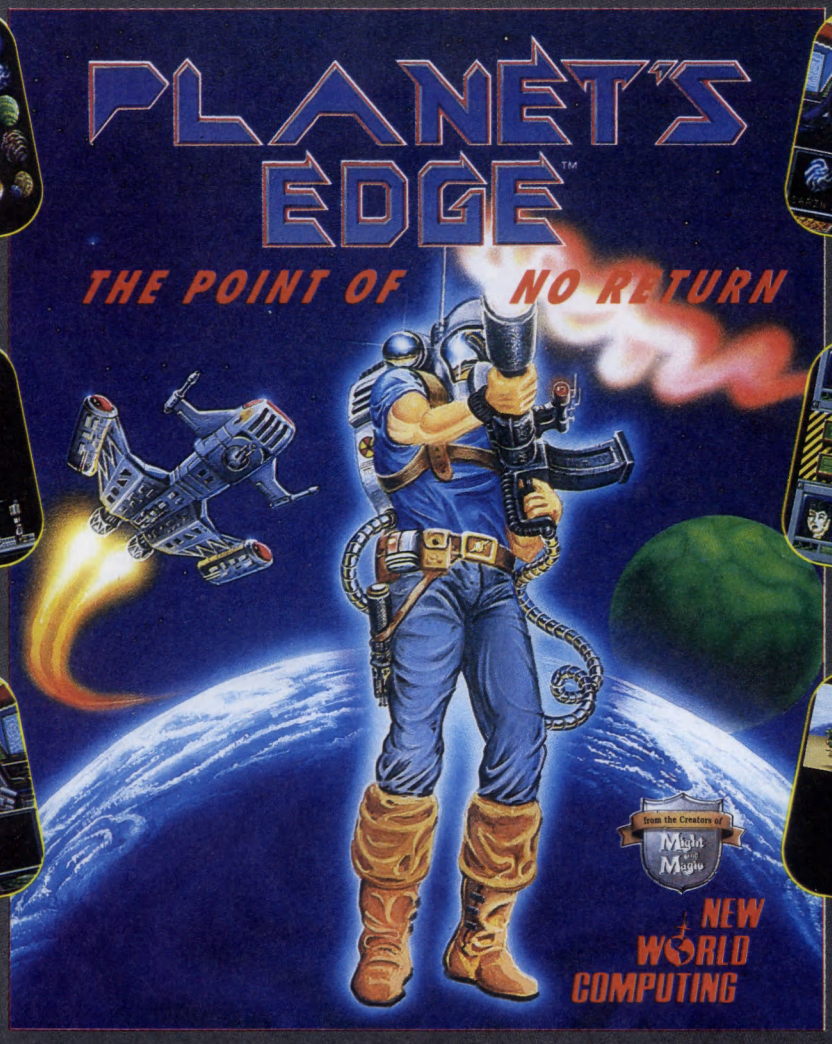
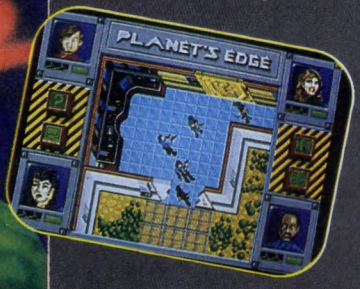


DESIGN

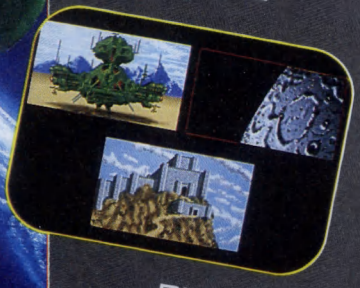
CHALLENGE



INTERACT



SOLVE



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Reader Service No. 5

NEW WORLD COMPUTING

P.O. Box 4302, Hollywood, CA. 90078

TIMEQUEST

A private function

In part two of his Timequest walkthrough, Greg Ellsworth makes tracks for 452 AD Rome

Published by
Legend Entertainment

Written by
Bob Bates

UK distributor
Microprose

Systems
IBM PC

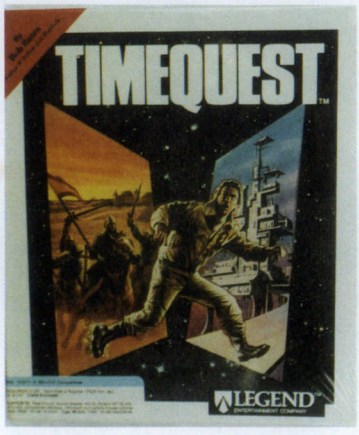
PC graphics
16-colour EGA and VGA

Supports
Roland MT-32 and Adlib sound boards; digitized real sound from internal speaker. Music and sound effects only accessible when playing from a hard disk

Attila the Hun is waiting on the road to Ravenna, getting ready to sack Rome. Pope Leo is about to travel there to meet with him, convinced that he can persuade him to turn back with words alone. Vettenmyer has gotten Attila to demand action, a definite miracle from God as proof that he is too powerful to cross. It so happens that in about 350 years, the Chinese will invent fireworks, and some Buddhist priests in Peking will design a display that will amaze barbarians and children alike. But they'll only allow a most holy person to enter their inner sanctum, so the player must set himself up as a saint. From the Interkron: *TS Peking 1361. Out. N. E.*

Here the player joins the line of mourners attending the funeral of a Shang emperor, being held in the cave at the end of the Sacred Way. This is the only time in history the cave will be open. The only way to get in is to get in line as one of the mourners. Unfortunately for the traveller, the tradition is that the emperor's most loyal subjects get to be buried alive with their beloved sovereign, then drink poison to follow him into the hereafter. The official that will seal the tomb indicates that the tablets within may hold the secret to escape, but studying the writings forever from a distance, as I did at first, will accomplish nothing. Enter the tomb E and the official will seal the entrance with a boulder. Then: *Pass basin* (no thanks!). *Sit on bench. Meditate.*

The player can read the four tablets if he wishes, they are taken from real Chinese writings, and I felt they fit into the theme of the end game. But he can read them all day without success unless he is sitting on the bench. Now, there's a means of escape as well as a big emerald close at hand: *U. Get basin. Pour water in statue's mouth. Get emerald. S.*



After getting flushed out of the cave, the player is now ready to jump forward about 2000 years and establish himself as a holy man: *W. S. IN. TS Peking 452. OUT. N. N.*

He meets a panhandling Buddhist monk who needs a donation to help build a new temple here. *Give emerald to priest.* There, that was easier than donating to those churches on television, and doesn't the private feel good knowing he'll be forever immortalized as the founder of the first Buddhist temple in Peking? Now he's going to jump forward another 350 years, where he'll find the temple thriving and himself a welcome visitor: *S. S. In. TS Peking 800. Out. N. N. E. E. Ask priest for mask.*

If the player looked at the portrait in the temple before he donated the emerald in the past, it wouldn't bear the features it does now, and he wouldn't be seen by the priest as the reincarnation of the temple's founder, allowing him to be admitted to the sanctuary now. Looking at the mask, he can see it's just the thing to convince Attila of the power of the Christian God in 452 AD Rome. If the private has Churchill's lighter from 1940 AD Dover, he's all set: *W. W. S. S. In. TS Rome 452. Out. U. NW. W.*

The player arrives in this timeplace at 12:00 noon and Attila's army will attack at 3:30pm, but the private's little pyrotechnic display will convince the barbarian that Rome is no place for the Huns! Inside the Vatican he meets Pope Leo, preparing to go out and face the barbarian leader. Answer *yes* to his question, then: *E. NE. W. Z. Light mask.*

When Attila beholds the special effects miracle, he agrees to turn back and leave Rome alone. After a some thanks seasoned with a little chastisement from Pope Leo, the player is left alone to continue his journey. More importantly, the Pope gives him a valuable parchment from the Vatican library which will be a key to the 1519 AD Mexico quest. Next, return to the Interkron to head for 1215 AD Dover, to help put an end to the feudal system in Europe: *E. SW. SE. D. In. TS Dover 1215.*

1215 AD – Dover

King John, under pressure from his barons and with his treasury depleted from his recent war, has agreed to sign the Magna Charta and ensure the rights of the individual. This will lay the foundation for our democratic system, but Vettenmyer has convinced the King's nephew to help

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Reader Service No. 5

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refill his coffers, and if the courier from Dover reaches Windsor Castle with the message King John will not have to submit to his subjects' demands. The player arrives near the tavern in Dover at 12 noon, and must intercept the courier before he reaches the King at about 12:40pm. This time, the private will have a little help from Robin Hood and his merry band of outlaws. From the Interkron: *TS Dover 1215. Out. SE. N. Z. S. Get on horse. W. Z. Get scroll. Read scroll. NE. Z. Z. SW. Search courier. Open pouch. Show letter to outlaw leader. Z. NW. Z. Z.*

There! After the letter on the courier is cleverly altered by Friar Tuck, whatever it said obviously convinced King John that Otto would not support him. He signs the Magna Charta, and the job here is done. Return to the Interkron, and prepare to get Queen Elizabeth and Drake together in 1588 AD Dover. This requires a couple of side trips first: *SE. E. Get off horse. NW. In. TS Rome 1519.*

1588 AD – Dover

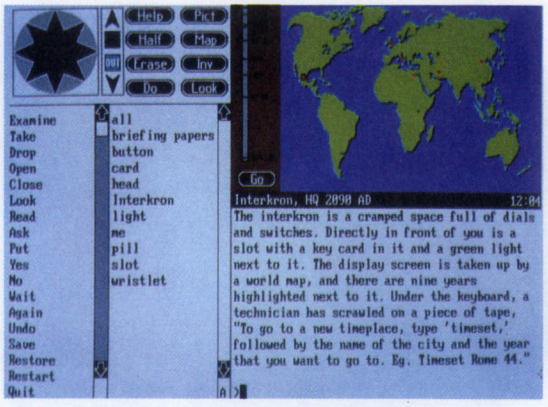
The Spanish Armada waits across the English Channel, ready to invade England. Philip of Spain is being backed by the Catholic church in Rome, which wants to see the Protestant Queen Elizabeth deposed. The Queen renounced the Catholic church for not acknowledging her divorce, and the key to this segment is the fact that she'll have nothing to do with Catholicism, the Vatican, and especially the Pope. She is scheduled to meet Drake in the eastern bedroom upstairs from the ageless tavern in Dover, but Vettenmyer has altered the note she sent him so that Drake will have a liaison with a call girl in the western bedroom instead. To head off this disaster, the player must get the Queen to switch rooms, and he begins by jumping to 1519 AD Rome. From the Interkron: *TS Rome 1519. Out. U. NW. W. Z. Get book.*

Pope Leo X and Michelangelo argue here in St Peter's about the design of a statue destined to become the Pieta. The Pope drops an autobiography, and if the private wants to *X book*, he'll see nothing but pages about the Pope's greatness. Surely he wouldn't want to lose this, so *Give book to Leo.* In return, he'll give the player an indulgence, good for a freebie at the souvenir stand. Leo dispenses these freely, which is probably why the souvenir vendor is going broke: *E. Give indulgence to vendor.*

The vendor reluctantly gives the player a plaque, which will certify that any room it is placed in has the Pope's blessing. Ah! Here's the thing to get Liz out of that bedroom 69 years from now, but she must think it was there before she arrived. Well, sounds like another time jump to me: *SE. D. In. TS Dover 1519. Out. SE. N. N. Open door. Lift floorboard.*

Put plaque in cache. Replace floorboard.

The plaque is hidden in the cache, and now it must be discovered by the player in the Queen's presence. By the way, if the private hadn't replaced the warped floorboard, the innkeeper would have nailed it down and he wouldn't have been able to open it in the future. Return to the Interkron for a short trip: *W. S. S. NW. In. TS Dover 1588. Out. SE. N. N. Knock. Enter. Bow.*



Oh, what a royal pain! For fun, the player might try to *open door* without knocking, or doing anything in Her Majesty's presence before showing the proper respect. Now, to really get her goat: *Lift floorboard. Get plaque. Show plaque to Elizabeth.*

Leave the room W and watch the queen exert her authority, then *Z until 6:00* and Drake comes up the stairs for his meeting.

However, the reception is not quite what he expected from the note he received! Things are back on track, and the Spanish Armada will be defeated. If the 452 AD Rome segment has been completed, the player now has the original writings of Plutarch, which will make the sailor who accompanied Drake very happy: *S. Give parchment to sailor.*

The sailor, actually a poet, gives the private a helmet which Drake got from a conquered Spanish captain. This is a key to the 1519 AD Mexico quest and restoring the Quetzlcoatl myth. Return to the Interkron: *S. NW. In. TS Dover 1361.*

1519 AD – Mexico

In 1519 AD, the mighty Aztec nation was conquered by a small Spanish army, because the people there believed the leader of the expedition was sent by their god Quetzlcoatl and they could not stand before him. Vettenmyer has gone to great lengths this time to destroy the myth. The player must initiate the legend in 1361 BC Mexico, reappear as the feathered god in 44 BC with a sign which their conqueror will bear almost 1500 years later, then watch history unfold properly in 1519 AD. He must have the Spanish helmet from 1588 AD Dover, which requires completing the 452 AD Rome quest, which first means solving the puzzle in 1940 AD Dover... this is a devious game! From the Interkron: *TS Dover 1361. Out. SE. W. Sit. Z. Z. Ask druid about knowledge.*

There, the private now knows something the Olmec Indians of ancient Mexico don't, and which will save his neck when he pops in there. This side trip is worth five points, and it is not mandatory to finishing the game, but the player isn't supposed to know about the eclipse unless he read this walk- through! Return to the Interkron: *E. NW. In. TS Mexico 1361. Out. Z.*

The traveller is in hot water now, literally! The Olmec was expecting a feathered serpent god, and a mere man stands before him... time to show him that the player is really Quetzlcoatl in disguise. *Tell Olmec about sun. Z.*

The eclipse occurs on schedule, and the Olmec cowers in fright, giving the makeshift deity some breathing room. All his possessions, including the Olmec's flint knife, lie outside the pot. The player only has three turns before the Olmec skewers him, isn't it nice to know there's a *get all* command? *U. Get all. In.*

Time stops in the Interkron, but if the private steps out into this time-place again, guess what's for supper? He has established the premise that Quetzlcoatl appeared, changed into a man, and escaped an Olmec Indian cannibal. Now, the Toltec Indians await his return in 44 BC to show them the sign of their defeat to come in 1519 AD, but he won't be convincing enough to fool them the same way twice. He must negotiate a dark maze in 800 AD Mexico to retrieve a costume hanging in a closet. The only point in history that the maze is lighted is in 452 AD, and that's how to map the maze, gain a clue to Vettenmyer's hide-out, and get one point. That's covered in another section, for now, just follow my lead: *TS Mexico 800. Out. E. NE. NW. E. NE. SE. W. SE. S. S. S. Get costume. N. N. N. NW. E. NW. SW. W. SE. SW. W. In.*

The player will have to negotiate the maze twice more in other time periods to gather points and clues.

Now, the private must make his appearance in 44 BC Mexico then travel to 1519 AD to see Vettenmyer's plan fail: *TS Mexico 44. Wear costume. Out. Put helmet on pillow. In. TS Mexico 1519. Out. Z. Z. Z. In. TS Peking 1940.*

If the player has noted the description of the mural each time he made a jump, he'll see how he affected history each time. Now that Montezuma has chosen not to fight, the private's work here is done. Time for the most complex quest of the game – 800 AD Rome, and 1798 Dover/Cairo/Rome.

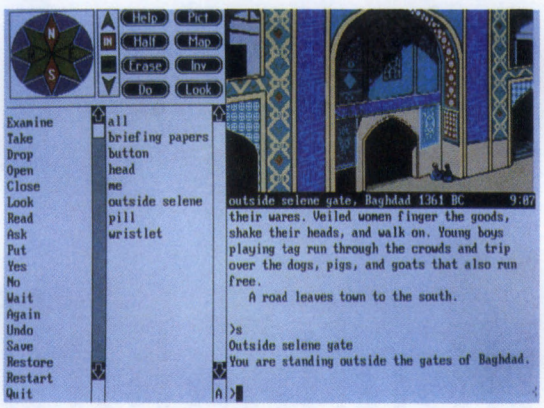
800 AD – Rome (1)

The player arrives here at 10am and Charlemagne is due to be crowned at noon, if he can be shown that he is worthy of the crown of emperor by seeing some sort of sign on the crown. This quest will require the private to mug a priest, steal the crown, play a game with young Tut, convince Napoleon to help recover the crown, steal the crown again and return it before the priest wakes up. Simple! Here we go, to get some ether: *TS Peking 1940. Out. N. Z until 12:00. Get cocktail. S. In. Open bottle. Get hanky.*

Yeah, the player probably thought he would have to lob the bomb at the priests... well, I was thinking along those lines for awhile. But: *TS Rome 800. Out. U. NW. W. N. Pour ether on hanky. Cover priest with hanky. Get crown. S. E. SE. D. In.*

Oh, stealing from a church! But the private will return it before the priest awakens, and remember Drexler's last words, 'Go anywhere, do anything'? Now, the player is going to find the babe floating down the river in 1361 BC Cairo, so the little girl can take him home. The timescale may be a bit off here, but nobody's saying that this is that certain Israelite baby, right? Off we go: *TS Cairo 1361. Out. N. W. N. E.*

Tut's sister wants the babe, and the private has no desire to babysit all through time, so say *yes*. *Wait* until the girl takes the bundle of joy into the palace, and young Tut will play



Pharaoh. *Give crown to Tut.* Easy come, easy go. The player isn't going to even see that crown again for over 2500 years, and he won't get his hands on it for over 700 years after that. He does have a map now, and if he has Churchill's lighter from 1940 AD Rome, he's set to go look at it and return with proof he was there: *E. S. In. TS Cairo 1215. Out. N. W. S. S. Push panel. W. X map.*

The player should be in the room with deadly whirling blades and tiles inscribed with animal pictographs. Push them in the order the map describes, the sequence is different each game. Now the way is clear to continue: *W. W. Get ankh. E. E. E. N. N.*

Unfortunately, the private couldn't get the crown, but Tut's ankh is proof he has been inside the pyramid. He has two problems now – the bridge is ruined and he is still a little too big to reach the crown. Both of these problems are solvable once the player finishes the 1798 AD Dover/Rome segment and if he has the turban from the 800 AD Baghdad segment. Assuming the player followed this walk-through thus far, he has solved the Sultan's problem in Baghdad and can proceed to 1798 AD Rome. Return to the Interkron: *E. S. In. TS Rome 1798.*

1798 AD – Dover and Rome

The player arrives once again in the sewers of Rome at 3:30 and has until 6:30 until Napoleon decides to invade England. Before going to Napoleon's head quarters, ensure the traveller has completed the first part of the 800 AD Rome segment, and has Tut's map and ankh. From the Interkron: *TS Rome 1798. Out. U. Get rock. SE. Throw rock at window. Z. Z. Z.*

A little petty vandalism gets the player inside to see Napoleon, and while the lawbreaker waits for the general to judge him for his crime he hears the conversation between Bonaparte and his aide. After this, Napoleon astutely determines that the player needed to see him for an important reason. *Show map to Napoleon.* Now he's interested, but can the private prove that the map is genuine? Say *yes*, then *show ankh to Napoleon.* Napoleon agrees to meet the player in Cairo that fall and gives him back the map. He writes a pass that will allow the vandal to visit him in Cairo, but more importantly, will serve as proof of Napoleon's intention to invade Egypt instead of England. After the player is escorted out of the building, return to the Interkron: *NW. D. In. TS Dover 1798. Out. SE. N.*

The boarding hook that Admiral Lord Nelson is displaying while telling of his past exploits and fretting about Napoleon's attack plan is what the player is here to get. The Admiral suspects his nemesis will strike Egypt, but won't leave England unprotected without definite proof. *Show pass to Nelson*, and he's off to Cairo without hesitation, leaving his boarding hook behind. *Get hook* then return to the Interkron: *S. NW. In. TS Cairo 1798.* SP

*The **Timequest** walk-through concludes next issue.*

> ***THE GAME DOES SHOW PROMISE... WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION***
>
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BLITZKRIEG AT THE ARDENNES

German tanks since dawn have been thrusting into Allied lines at points over a 60-mile front from the River Roer to Luxembourg.

It seems the Germans have decided to launch a counter-offensive of some considerable strength. They are throwing in a fresh division of infantry, and these men, with the tanks, have overrun a number of villages and made several wedges on the Belgian-German and Luxembourg-German borders.

The Germans are pressing forward fanatically with an order of the day from von Rundstedt saying: "Now is the time for the German Army to strike. Give your all in one last effort. Everything is at stake."

HISTORY

Early in December 1944 America and Britain were awaiting the return of its victorious armies in Europe. But on the other side of the Siegfried Line, Hitler had other plans, launching his last major surprise attack of the war — operation "Wacht am Rhein".

The plan was to quickly strike weakened Allied lines in Belgium and Luxembourg and to break through and move quickly to the Meuse to capture Liege and finally Antwerp. The capture of Antwerp was thought to be essential to postpone the invasion of Germany, giving the Fuhrer a chance to honour his promises of secret weapons which would win the war.

FEATURES

- ***Detailed full colour graphics***
- ***Realistic sound effects***
- ***One or two players***
- ***German saboteurs***
- ***Siegfried Line Artillery***
- ***Supply***
- ***Terrain effects***
- ***Paratroopers***
- ***V-2 Rocket attacks***
- ***Play customization***
- ***Save Game function***
- ***Handicapping system for play balance***
- ***Weather Fuel Dumps***
- ***Aerial bombardment***

INCLUDES

PC: 1 X 3 ½"

& 2 X 5 ¼" DISKS

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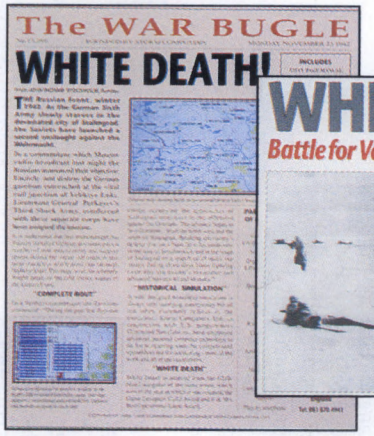
X 1 DISK

WWII NEWSPAPER OF THE DAY

30 PAGE MANUAL

RAW



> ***ALTHOUGH NOT AS SATISFYING AS BLITZKRIEG, WHITE DEATH IS STILL WORTH A LOOK***
>
> ***RAZE MAGAZINE***

PC & AMIGA $49.95

WHITE DEATH

The Russian Front, winter 1942. As the German Sixth Army slowly starves in the devastated city of Stalingrad, the Soviets have launched a second onslaught against the Wehrmacht.

In a communique which Moscow radio broadcast last night, the Russians announced their objective: Encircle and destroy the German garrison entrenched at the vital rail junction of Velikiye Luki. Lieutenant General Perkayev's Third Shock Army, reinforced with three separate corps have been assigned the mission.

It is understood that two under-strength but heavily fortified German divisions plus a number of rear area security and support troops defend the sector: All roads in this near trackless wilderness run through Velikiye Luki. The stage is set for a bitterly fought battle on the cold snowy wastes of the Eastern Front.

HISTORICAL SIMULATION

A well designed historical simulation is always very satisfying conceptually but all too often extremely tedious in the execution. RAW Entertainment, Inc., in conjunction with U.S. programmers Command Simulations, have employed advanced personal computer technology to do for wargaming what the computerized spreadsheet did for accounting — most of the work and all of the calculations.

WHITE DEATH

White Death is adapted from the GDW board wargame of the same name, which won in the year in which it was released, the Game Designers Guild Award and F & M's Best Operational Game Award.

FEATURES

- ***VERY sophisticated computer opponent***
- ***Six scenarios***
- ***Digitized sound effects (AMIGA)***
- ***Supply***
- ***Weather effects***
- ***Bunkers***
- ***Tank fright***
- ***Morale***
- ***Rail movement***
- ***Commandos***
- ***Rockets***
- ***Artillery spotting***
- ***Barrage***
- ***Headquarters***
- ***Garrisons***
- ***Unit Identification***
- ***Support***
- ***Play by telephone***

INCLUDES

PC: 1 X 3 ½"

& 2 X 5 ¼" DISKS

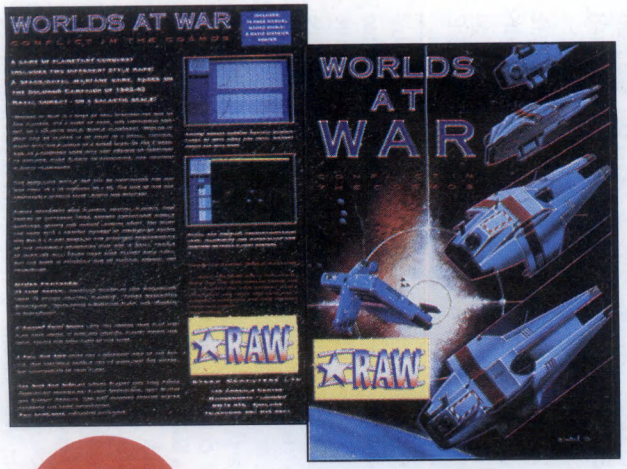
AMIGA (1 MEG)

X 1 DISK

WWII NEWSPAPER OF THE DAY

50+ PAGE MANUAL

RAW



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CONFLICT IN THE COSMOS

A game of planetary conquest

Includes two different style maps!

A space-naval warfare game, based on the Solomon Campaign of 1942-43

Naval combat — on a galactic scale!

'Worlds at War' *is a game of real strategy for one or two players. It's a game of naval & amphibious combat, on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, 'Worlds at War' can be played in an hour as a small, tactical study with the flavour of a chess game; or for a weekend, as a campaign game with vast regions of territory to explore, huge fleets to manouevre, and neutral planets to conquer.*

The scrolling battle map can be configured for any size from 10 x 10 through 50 x 50. The size of the map profoundly affects game length and strategy.

Pieces represent base planets, neutral planets, task forces of different types, bomber formations, missile barrages, scouts and marine landing craft. You start the game with a certain number of production points & build a fleet based on the strategic requirements of the randomly generated star map. A small trickle of supplies will reach your base planet each turn, but the game is primarily one of tactical combat, not production.

Other Features:

75 page manual, *covering gameplay and discussing: "How to attack neutral planets", "Three Suggested Strategies", "Developing a Scouting Plan", and "Massing vs Dispersion".*

A Victory Point Graph *lets you assess your play & plan your moves. It displays neutral planet points and total points for each turn of the game.*

A Full Map View gives you a snapshot view of the battle. Map controls enable you to highlight the different components of your fleet.

The Side Bar Display *shows Planet and Task Force production schedules, Flight Operations, Unit Status and Combat Results. Two exit windows provide system feedback and game information.*

Full game save, *including auto-save.*

PRODUCTS ARE AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD SOFTWARE RETAILERS OR FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL:

RAW

RAW ENTERTAINMENT, INC.
3027 MARINA BAY DRIVE, SUITE 110
LEAGUE CITY, TEXAS 77573-2772
(713) 538-3399

Reader Service No. 45

"...WHAT THIS GAME HAS IS PLAY VALUE. MUCH LIKE THE VERY POPULAR EMPIRE AND ITS VARIANTS YOU HAVE SEVERAL VIABLE STRATEGIES & EVERY NEW GAME HAS A RANDOMLY GENERATED MAP THAT PROVIDES FRESH CHALLENGES."

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD MAGAZINE

INCLUDES
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& 1 X 5 ¼" DISKS
AMIGA (1 MEG)
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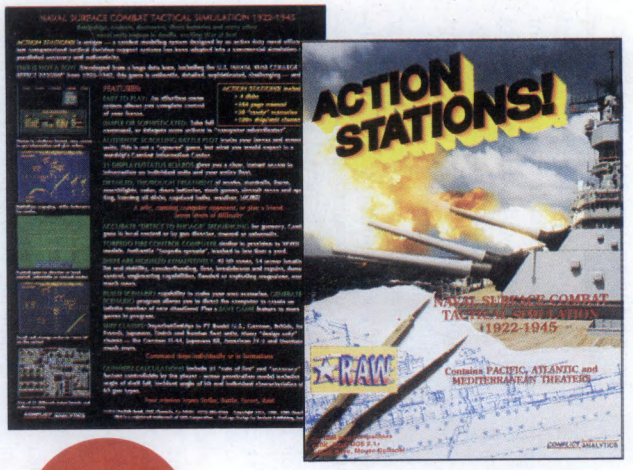
75 PAGE MANUAL
& DAVID DIETRICK POSTER



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NAVAL SURFACE COMBAT TACTICAL SIMULATION 1922-1945

Battleships, cruisers, destroyers, shore batteries and many other naval units engage in deadly, exciting War at Sea!

ACTION STATIONS! *is unique — a combat modeling system designed by an active duty naval officer to test computerized tactical decision support systems has been adapted into a commercial simulation of unparalleled accuracy and authenticity.*

THIS IS NOT A TOY!

Developed from a huge data base, including the US NAVAL WAR COLLEGE "FIRE EFFECT SYSTEM" from 1922-1945, this game is authentic, detailed, sophisticated, challenging — and FUN!

EASY TO PLAY: *An effortless menu system allows you complete control of your forces.*

SIMPLE OR SOPHISTICATED: *Take full command or delegate some actions to "computer subordinates".*

AUTHENTIC SCROLLING BATTLE PLOT *tracks your forces and enemy units. This is not a "squares" game, but what you would expect in a warship's Combat Information Centre.*

21 DISPLAYS/ STATUS BOARDS *gives you a clear, instant access to information on individual units and your entire fleet.*

DETAILED, THOROUGH TREATMENT *of smoke, starshells, flares, searchlights, radar, shore batteries, stack gasses, aircraft recce and spotting, burning oil slicks, capsized hulls, weather and MORE!*

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NOMINATED WARGAME OF THE YEAR, 1990 — COMPUTER GAMING WORLD MAGAZINE

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"TECHNICALLY I CAN'T FAULT ACTION STATIONS"

RAZE MAGAZINE

Features

A wily, cunning computer opponent or play a friend.

Seven levels of difficulty.

Accurate "Detect to Engage" sequencing

Torpedo fire control computer.

Ships are modeled exhaustively.

Build and generate scenario.

Save game.

Ship classes.

Command ships individually or in formation.

Gunnery calculations.

Four mission types: Strike, Battle, Escort, and Raid.

RAW

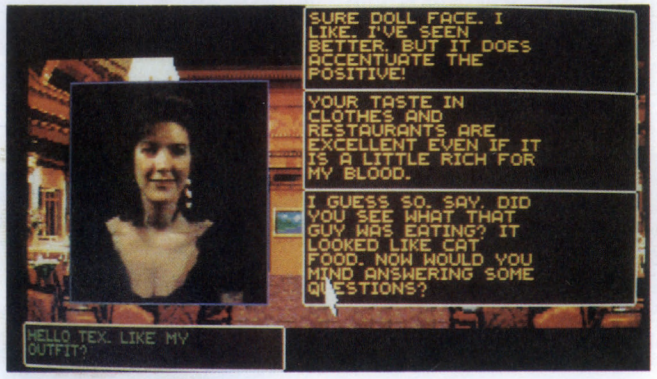
Martian Memorandum

Read my lips

By Theo Clarke

Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean; who is neither tarnished nor afraid. Tex Murphy is just such a man. A hard-boiled private dick from the 30s – the 2030s.

It is 2039 in San Francisco. Six years have passed since the events of last year's **Mean Streets** game; Tex is in his office again, with more bills than cash. He picks up his comlink and speaks to his secretary Stacey, whom he has not paid for two months. 'Hi Tex', says the image of Stacey on the comlink. 'You'll never guess who has a job for you.' Stacey's lips move in sync with her words.


SURE DOLL FACE. I LIKE. I'VE SEEN BETTER. BUT IT DOES ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE!
YOUR TASTE IN CLOTHES AND RESTAURANTS ARE EXCELLENT EVEN IF IT IS A LITTLE RICH FOR MY BLOOD.
I GUESS SO. SAY, DID YOU SEE WHAT THAT GUY WAS EATING? IT LOOKED LIKE CAT FOOD. NOW WOULD YOU MIND ANSWERING SOME QUESTIONS?
HELLO TEX. LIKE MY OUTFIT?

Tex goes to see Marshall Alexander, head of Terraform Inc. Alexander hires Tex to rescue his missing daughter, Alexis. He thinks that she has been kidnapped and something else is missing... but he won't talk about that.

Tex makes a date with Alexander's secretary before going to search the girl's flat. There is no sign of a kidnapping but there are other clues that the police have missed. Tex helps the police investigate a nasty ritual killing in a railway siding before flying to a ruined Mayan city to explore a smuggling operation. The clues lead our man to the Terran colonies on Mars, a planet once inhabited by a great civilization.

The player has eight action key words with which to control Tex. The PI can look, open, move, get, use or go to objects. He can also talk to people and in some cases he can travel to places. Having chosen the key word with mouse or a single keystroke the player indicates the target object with another single motion. This elegantly simple mechanism is far less restricting than it sounds.

The talk command is the feature of which Access seems particularly proud. It certainly is an impressive use of technology. There is a submenu behind this option. The talking Tex can choose from up to three conversational sentences or can ask about known topics. The responses are presented as synthesized speech synchronized with animated digitized video.

The effect of this is quite powerful; this is the first game that really has lived up to the interactive movie claim made by nearly every adventure game publisher in the past 12 months.

Digitized live action video was used quite effectively by Dynamix in **Secret Agent: David Wolf** some years ago and its recent **Heart of China** used largely static images in an entertaining story sequence. **Martian Memorandum** combines both techniques and adds the key ingredient of synchronized speech.

The proffered statements and the characters replies can yield continuing exchanges of up to half a dozen responses, the nature of which depends on the statements chosen by the player. Sadly the characters' reactions seem rather arbitrary so the player can have to plod through all of the permutations before finding the right path through the conversation. It is very tiresome indeed to hear the same synthesized sentence a score of times as one tries to solve the conversation.

The puzzles facing Tex are not as complex as those in **Countdown**. There is a crude but extensive context-sensitive help that gives increasingly obvious hints whenever a player is struggling. The first level of the hints should be quite sufficient for anybody with sufficient intellect to move a mouse, but the more obvious levels do everything except actually moving the mouse!

Where the average player really needs help is during the interminably obtuse conversation sequences. Infuriatingly, help is never available in conversation mode. We showed this review copy to an experienced adventure gamer who did not know anything about the game. Initially she was wildly enthusiastic about the game, its graphics and its sound. Then she encountered the conversations. Within two hours she had decided that the game was too dull to continue. If you don't like puzzles that require methodical repetition to solve them, don't play this game without access to a solution.

Flaw plan

This design flaw turns **Martian Memorandum** from an exciting and entertaining game into a series of very short, good games linked by repetitive displays of technological wizardry. The graphics are quite remarkable. They make full use of the functionality of the VGA standard with a combination of well-painted scenes and digitized live action.

The music and sound effects are far superior to those found in **Countdown**. The synthesized speech even sounds acceptable through a PC speaker thanks to Access' advanced Realsound technology – but get a Roland or a Soundblaster if you want the full aural experience because the other sound boards can only cope with the music or the sound effects, not both.

It is clear that Access intended the game to be moderately challenging. The help menu ensures that beginners won't get stuck, however, experienced adventurers might find the game a bit light. Access certainly has technocrats on its team, but on the evidence of **Martian Memorandum**, a few gamers wouldn't go amiss either. SP

Published by
Access

UK distributor
US Gold

Designed by
Brent Erickson and Chris Jones

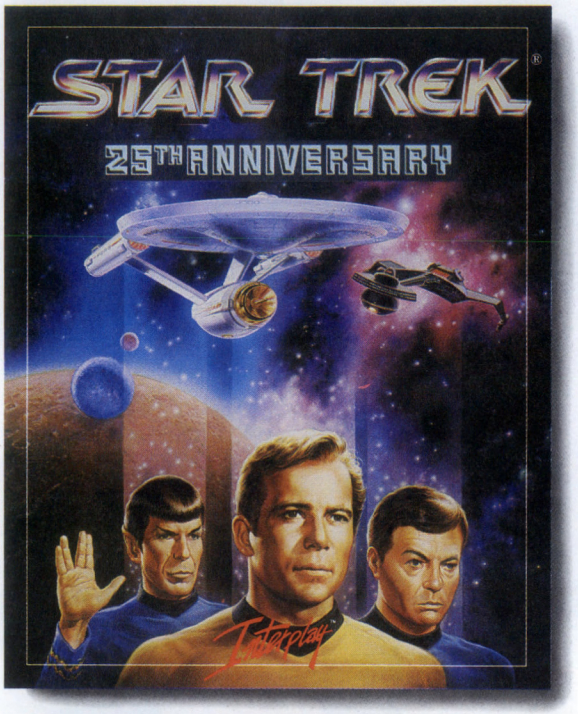
Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
VGA, MCGA

Supports
Roland, Adlib and Sound Blaster sound boards; mouse, joystick or keyboard

THE VOYAGE CONTINUES!

STAR TREK: 25th Anniversary™.



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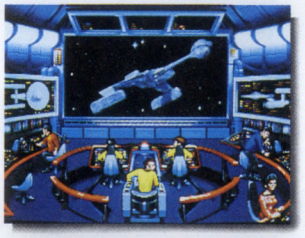

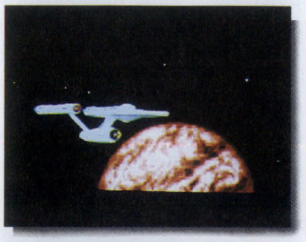

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Crowds flock to the European Computer Entertainment Show...

ECES

Brian Walker attends the show that wasn't all there

The European Computer Entertainment Show was billed as 'The Greatest Show on Earth'. On the day, security guards were employed to turn away young children, and attendees who did make it in were forced to enter through a side door.

Once inside it transpired that the organizers had booked only a small section of the hall – the yawning gaps provided an apt metaphor for the software industry's relationship with the outside world. The Worst Show on Earth was not the fault of the industry, though. For this the blame can be laid squarely at the feet of Emap Exhibitions, a cousin of Emap Images which publishes a number of computer magazines.

Before the show, most software companies wanted only a hospitality suite to entertain trade guests. Their rationale was that most of the games now being produced were unsuitable for the sort of the public this show tends to attract.

Instead of listening to what the industry wanted, however, Emap told the companies what they were going to get. The result? Many of the hotels in the area experienced a sudden upsurge in suite bookings. For guests and journalists attempting to make appointments on time, this proved to be a logistical nightmare as the central London traffic formed a formidable barrier between the hotels and the show site. Nevertheless, no effort was spared, no drink declined, and no party invitation refused in attempt to bring you the readers the most comprehensive coverage available.

Get your dirk out, dork, er, Dirk: Dragon's Lair: Escape from Singe Castle

No more heroes

Canadian company Readysoft announced the release of three full-screen animated adventures.

Space Ace II: Borf's Revenge takes off where the original **Space Ace I** left off.

On the off-chance that you've forgotten, this is on board the spaceship of the evil commander Borf. Only now it's Baby Borf, for the villain has been transported back to the womb by so-called hero Ace.

But help for Baby Borf is on the way; his henchmen, The Goons, have taken possession of the infanto ray which will be used to bring young Borf back to his real age *(will this make him a baby boomer? – Ed)*, ying tong tiddli po.

From Baby Borf we move to Dirk to the Daring. Dirk is the so-called hero of **Dragon's Lair: Escape from Singe Castle**.

Having defeated Singe the Dragon, Dirk must now do battle with the Evil Shapeshifter who has kidnapped the beautiful Princess Daphne and is threatening her with a fate worse than attending an Emap exhibition.

From Dirk the Daring we venture out of the world of High Speech, where all that is Important gets Initial Capitals, into the world of **Guy Spy**. Guy is the world's greatest counter espionage agent and has been ordered to destroy the doomsday machine of the evil Von Max.

The only thing that anyone can be reasonably sure about is that Von Max is a stereotypical villain and that he lives in Berlin.

Dragons Lair will be available for the PC, ST and Mac; **Space Ace II** will be available for the Amiga as well.

Tanked up: Team Yankee 2: The Pacific Islands (far left); bright sight: Colours from Infogrames

Guy Spy will be released for the PC, Amiga and CDTV. In the UK these will all be released on the Empire label.

Reds in the running

So you thought the Soviet empire was dead and the Red Army now only meant **Sim Ant**? Wrong. The Reds have legged it to the South Pacific just so they can take part in **Team Yankee 2: The Pacific Islands**. In fact they've overrun the islands.

The player's task as the **Team Yankee** commander is to liberate the islands from the red hordes by way of a series of strategic tank battles. As each island is reached the player must choose the area of landing, and then the order in which each area on the island is attacked. Communication centres, such as satellite stations, need to be located and destroyed.

The player is also responsible for the purchase and removal of equipment and men between each battle. Funds are generated according to the performance of the team in action.

As in the original game, **Team Yankee 2** is a real-time tank simulator that uses Empire's unique bit-mapped technology. Certain features of tank control have been upgraded from the original; buildings and other objects can now be destroyed under missile attack, while the Russian strategy has been made more sophisticated.

Team Yankee 2 will be published in the UK by Empire Strategy and in the US by Readysoft in November. ST and Amiga versions will be first with the PC to follow three weeks later.

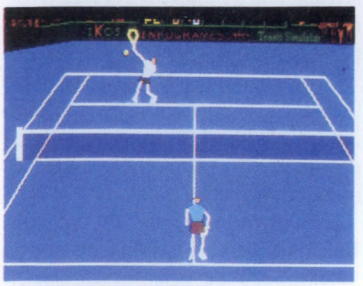
Eternam, maaan

Bonjour, welcome to the world of **Eternam**, close to **Drakken** but 10 times bigger, according to those dapper French style people at Infogrames. They say **Eternam** is so big it is no place for 'chicks'. They even talk about taking an imaginary 'trip through various eras'! Who would have thought that such a *chic* company like Infogrames would engage in such hippie dialogue? But let's get on with the story (*merci*). The player receives a message from the universal social security agency. As a result he is then deposited in the archipelago – a very frightening place and with no jobs whatsoever.

Infogrames says the aim of the game is 'hazy', maaan, but the *raison d'etre* will soon become clear. Here are some of the features that will be included with the game: 256 colours 'simultaneously' on screen. Like, wow daddy-yo! *(that was the fifties – Ed);* 'mobile real-time 3D with height differences'; animations of cartoon quality; thousands of unknown monsters; 'meetings with legendary characters'; and 'film quality'.

Eternam – the film quality mobile real-time animated adventure game with height differences, will be released by Infogrames in Europe on the PC in November and for CD ROM early next year. No other versions are planned. US distribution to be announced.

Yet another new game from the wonderful *hommes et femmes* at Infogrames is **Colours** – an abstract game for one or two players whose objective is to enlarge territory by the spreading of some very trippy colours. The game area is composed of myriad little multi-coloured diamonds.



Court at the line: Advantage Tennis brings in sponsorship, slow motion replays and three game modes

Each player starts from a corner of the screen and must gain ground by absorbing the diamonds adjacent to his territory. Little by little the territory gets bigger and two large colour patches appear on the screen. Combat must now occur. Infogrames glamour girl Christine Gessler says she can't stop playing with it. Anybody who can help should give her a call (oo-er). Features include: tournament mode for two players; save option for high scores; hundreds of different screens; millions of dazzling colours; sunglasses optional.

'You dream of facing the best international tennis men either in an exhibition or the Grand Slam, you want to climb up the ATP rankings or simply increase your belongings.' This is the extraordinary premise of **Advantage Tennis**, the new sports sim from the *encroyable* Infogrames.

Here are some of the features that will enable you to collect sponsor stickers *and* increase your belongings: slow motion replays; varying power and angle of each shot; three game modes: training, grand slam, or exhibition; three court types: sand, grass, and synthetic. **Advantage Tennis** will be available on all formats very soon.

Koei's **L'Empereur,** previewed in *Strategy Plus 10*, will be released in Europe in late October by Infogrames, and by Koei in the US.

Crimson tidings

UK readers may be forgiven for thinking that **Celtic Legends** refers to the exploits of Scotland's great foot-

ball club. It will comes as a shock then (especially to the Tartan Army) to discover that this new game from Ubi Soft deals with fairies. But that's not all – goblins, shopkeepers and peasants are in there too and all are under threat from Sogrom the Crimson.

Despite the seemingly hackneyed theme (*Actually, if it were hackneyed, it would be Sogrom the Black, aka the Dark One – Prod Ed*), this was potentially one of the best games at the show. **Celtic Legends** is a strategy game, and a rather good one too, with a strong role-playing element.

Characters are created with various experience points and from then on it's a strategic battle to defend the land and destroy the usurper. The combat is handled in an original manner: range, magic and experience determine the outcome. Characters can also be 'reincarnated' provided that enough points are available.

Like many of the new games at the show this had a two-player option – in fact this was a considerable mini-trend. **Celtic Legends** will be released for the Amiga in November with ST and PC versions to follow.

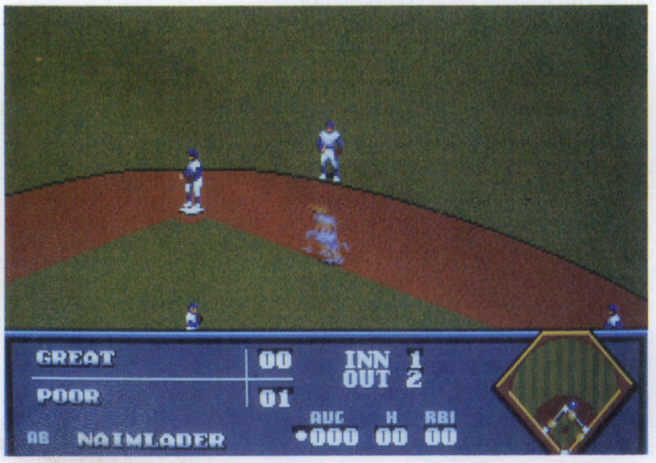
Another strategy game from Ubi Soft that looks full of promise is **Battle Isle**, which was the subject of a brief preview in *Strategy Plus 8*. This is another game with a two-player option (using a split screen) that recalls **The Perfect General** in that an abstract land must be conquered with purchased units.

BAT was not one of our favourite games so no one was leaping around the office when I reported that **BAT 2** is on its way.

The PC version of the wonderful **Pro Tennis Tour 2** is due out 'any day now'. Still no news on whether the extra RAM available to most PC users, will used to access some of the sound effects missing from the 1Mb Amiga version.

Ubi Soft also has a remarkable series of compilations due for release. **Air Combat Aces** includes: **Falcon**, **Gunship** and **Fighter Bomber** all in one box! **Air Sea Supremacy** comprises **Silent Service**, **Gunship**, **Carrier Command**, **P47 Thunderbolt**, **F15 Strike Eagle** and **Wings**. A truly amazing collection and a must for anyone who missed these game first time round.

Both compilations will be released for the PC, Amiga, and ST. **Air Sea Supremacy** should be available now; **Air Combat Aces** is expected in late November.



Powerful sim: TV Sports Baseball (above); strategy and role-playing meet in Celtic Legends (top right); two-player option: Battle Isle (bottom right)

It came back from the desert

Cinemaware is now up and about again after being down and out. The first release following its 'demise' will the third game in the TV Sports series **TV Sports: Baseball**, which the company believes is the most powerful statistical simulation yet. Features include 26 teams of all time greats; management and arcade options; stats for a complete 162 game season; and 25-man rosters with five-man reserve lists to replace injured players.

TV Sports: Baseball will be published next month for the PC and Amiga. In the US the title will be changed to **Bo Jackson Baseball** and released by Data East.

Following on from **TV Sports: Baseball** will be **TV Sports: Boxing**. In addition to the usual arcade aspect of the game there will be an extensive management side. This allows the player to select a manager and coach and make strategic career choices to boost a bid for the championship.

Other options include a TV Sports Boxing magazine for insights into opponents; sparring in exhibition(ist) mode; 10 human players may compete in tournaments; a sort of plastic surgery option to change the features of the pugs; and a business management section (Don King tear your hair out).

TV Sports: Boxing will be released by Mirrorsoft in the UK in October for the PC with the Amiga version to follow later. The US title will be changed and the game will be published by Data East.

Last spotted in Las Vegas, Cinemaware's **Rollerbabes** looks set to hit the streets any time now. This is described as a fun, futuristic game that's a combination of roller derby, hockey, wrestling, boxing, skateboarding, and hairdressing.

The Rollerbabes are a team of professional female athletes of great skill and beauty. Amateur teams that can compete in the game include the Eraser Heads *(they ought to be lynched – Ed)*, the Buzzcuts (a coterie of hairdressers), the Moving Violations (a squad of mermaids in case you hadn't guessed, the Fabulous Pig Brothers (a porcine blues band), the Stud Lites (a cowboy outfit), the Reddiwreckers (a demolition crew – Yo!), and the Subhumans (a surfer tribe).

Teams compete on a circular track and score points by a combination of covering distance, avoiding traps, and kicking their opponents in the nuts. **Rollerbabes** will have all the features players have come to expect from the TV Sports series including announcers, league play statistics, and the option of human control for each of the eight teams playing in the league. **Rollerbabes** should be available in December for the PC and Amiga in both the US and UK.

Pump it up

Infocom, the company that refuses to die, is back and with a brand new adventure on the Activision label. **Leather Goddesses of Phobos II: The Gas Pump Girls** comes to you courtesy of former Infocommie Steve Meretzky who wrote the original game. This somewhat tardy sequel is likely to horrify text adventure purists because it contains not only graphics but sound!

Characters in the game must have

been on a Berlitz course since the original was released for they now speak five different languages. In addition to the usual sound cards, the game will support the Activision Life Size Sound Enhancer interface. This will enable users dependent on the PC internal speaker to experience digitized squawks instead of the normal squawks.

The plot concerns a meteorite landing in a small American town in the 1950s, and guess what's showing at the local cinema? *It Came on the Desert*. An alien pops out of the meteorite much to the bemusement/horror/boredom of the locals.

One major difference between this and most adventure games is that the player can choose from three characters to play, thus the adventure can be resolved in a number of alternate ways.

The female option is Lydia Sandler, daughter of a reclusive scientist (aren't they all?). The male character is Zeke, owner of the local filling station.

In the true Meretzky sexist tradition Zeke has the opportunity to ogle young girls in their scanties while the closest poor old Lydia probably gets to sex is sucking on a lollipop. The last choice of character is the alien: it crashed by accident, cannot wait to get home, and has no opportunity for sex whatsoever. Wherever it goes, women shriek and faint and occasionally throw small objects. Men curse and throw larger objects. Users point and click their mouse.

Leather Goddesses of Phobos II will be available soon for the PC.

Death or Glory was mentioned in dispatches in the CES report in *Strategy Plus 6*, but here we go again as it's finally about to take off. This is a somewhat whimsical flight sim featuring planes and missions from several different eras. In fact it includes the '12 greatest missions of all time in 12 of the best known combat planes'.

Each plane is based on a NASA physics model that duplicates precise flight characteristics. The planes included are: Sopwith Camel, Fokker DR1, Spitfire, Messerschmidt 109, F-86 Sabre, MiG 15, F4 Phantom, MiG 21, Mirage, F-16, and many more. Well not that many, actually. There is also a 'what if' features which allows planes from different eras to be pitted against one another.

Death or Glory is described as having painstakingly detailed cockpit graphics. Ouch!

Look for this PC game on the Activision label.

Strike a light

Strikefleet, one of Lucasfilm's early efforts which was a hit on the PC even in low res EGA, has been revamped and should be released by Electronic Arts for the ST and Amiga this month. Both the graphics and sound have been considerably enhanced to bring this naval strategy game bang (!) up to date.

The player takes command of an entire fleet of warships including frigates, battlecruisers, destroyers, hydrofoils and helicopters. Ships must be carefully chosen to accomplish objectives. Up to 16 ships and more than 20 helicopters can be commanded at one time in battles against enemy cruisers, patrol boats, subs, long range missile bombers and land-based missile launches. The scenarios are set in the Atlantic, the Persian Gulf, the Norwegian Sea, and the North Sea.

Altogether there 14 real-time battle scenarios plus an eight-mission campaign with day or night options.

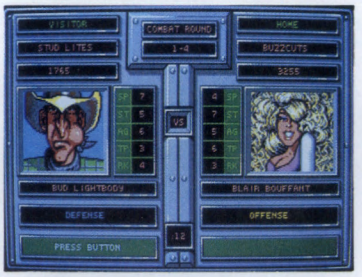
Amiga and ST owners now have the chance to say 'ouch!' to the biggest ball-breaker in space: **Hard Nova** is back so hang on to your nuts. Nova is a freelance merc and crypto feminist.

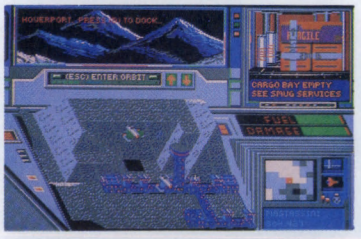
A freak space accident involving a meteor collision, an intergalactic lamppost, and a shipload of harpies left Nova's entire crew dead, apart from her navigator – the romantically named, A'kri Janr. Nova must now train a new crew on order to take on the hazardous tasks that lie ahead. Like the production of this magazine, much of the game is spent hanging out in bars (*Fat chance – Prod Ed).* Only here rounds consist of buying sentient creatures tequila slammers and then killing them, just in case the drink fails. Crew members, once they've sobered up, must travel from planet to planet learning to use space stations and stargates.

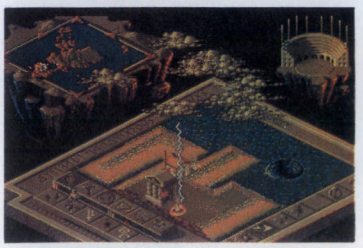
Hard Nova, a fantasy role-playing space opera with harpie undertones, will be available for the ST and Amiga soon. The game is already out on the PC. A clue book is available.

Yet another conversion from Electronic Arts is **Starflight II: Trade Routes of the Cloud Nebula**. This a fantasy role-playing game set in space (in case you weren't sure) but *sans* opera. The primary creatures are the Spemin, an arrogant race of slimy blobs. Their big ambition in life is to turn the world into a giant petri-dish (a sort of intergalactic pasta). The player's task is to prevent the world being turned into a giant pizza.

Freezing ice planets, boiling lava planets, and *quattro stagioni* planets must all be investigated if Earth is to avoid becoming just another item on a home delivery menu. The game features complete freedom of play in that the storyline is open-ended and contains many sub-plots and sub-sandwiches.







Lesser men might go 'Phwoar!': Rollerbabes (top); fill her up: Leather Goddesses of Phobos II – the Gas Pump Girls; ball-breaker: Hard Nova for the Amiga; and highly confidential: Populous 2 (bottom)

All the graphics, all the action, all the stats!

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IBM VGA DISPLAYS

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STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS, INC.

Starflight II will be released for the Amiga next month; the PC version is already available.

Pop 2

Populous II will be available for the ST and Amiga in December. The exact details, according to Electronic Arts, are 'highly confidential'. So, er, that's it, really.

The Big M

The only time sports have looked like playing a part in a Microprose game is when a golf course needs to be strafed. Perhaps **Microprose Golf** could be incorporated in **F19 Stealth Fighter**? This new golf game features 3D rolling landscapes and six custom-made courses. A player's stance, feet position, tee heights and club selection will all have a bearing on the quality of the shot.

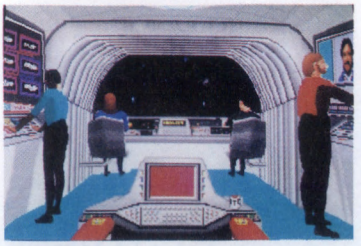
First impressions are that its main advantage over other golf games on the market are the scrolling top down views immediately following the shot. The graphics are better than **PGA Golf** but not in the class of **Links**.

No such reservations exist about **Formula One Grand Prix**, programmed by Geoff Crammond of **Stunt Car Racer** fame. The game includes all the 1991 circuits and 26 cars all modelled on the current racing teams such as Ligier, Leyton House, Williams, McLaren and Ferrari. Cars will carry team colours and start the season in accordance with their real 1991 performances.

Formula One Grand Prix will be available in November for the ST and Amiga. PC version to follow in the New Year.

More traditional fare from Microprose is **ATAC** which stands for **Advanced Air Tactical Command**. This is a part simulation, part strategy game set in the 'near future'. Corruption and violence have become an everyday part of life in the major cities because of some beastly Colombians who insist on selling drugs to whoever wants to buy them.

The player is secretly nominated, Ollie North style, to respond with quick and ruthless action. The supreme commander is put in charge of an elite team of 250 undercover agents and a tactical force of four F-22 fighter/bombers, two helicopters, based in a secret high-tech location in Colombia. The enemy. for its part, controls politicians, the judiciary, and can afford the best mercenaries.



Filling a (black) hole: Space Inc

ATAC will be available in early 1992 on all formats.

Lift Off gets lift off

One of the more endearing stories of the show was the news that Interplay is in the process of converting Fritz Bonner's boardgame **Lift Off** into a software simulation. Readers may recall an item in the CES report (*SP* 6) that stated Fritz himself was working on a such a project.

The boardgame is a simulation of the space race with the emphasis being on R&D. One to four players may participate. Interplay tells me that the multi-player element will be retained for the software version. In addition, data disks will follow that will introduce other countries. Actual newsreel footage will be included to enhance the historical aspect. The boardgame is excellent and Interplay should do the game justice.

Ships ahoy

The name Internecine does not exactly roll off the tongue, but at least two of its new games should be rolling onto your disk drive very shortly. **Fleet Commander** is the latest Second World War naval wargame from former naval officer Alan Zimm, whose **Action Stations** established him as one of the leading exponents of seaborne simulations.

Like **Action Stations** the game has been thoroughly researched. The detailed battle environment includes minefields, smoke, flares, oil slicks, capsized hulks, searchlights, radar, shore batteries, numerous aircraft types, air bases, and weather factors. Guns can be controlled locally or by up to eight 'directors', manual or automatic. **Fleet Commander** will have a two-player option including a modem facility.

The black holes of space are rapidly being filled up by trading games and software crews seeking conversations with aliens. **Space Inc** looks on first sight a cut above average in that in appears to incorporate most elements of the space genre, save for arcade sequences, without ever lapsing into cliche. Trading, navigation, management, and strategic combat are combined with spectacular graphics making for could be one of the surprise hits of the year.

Both **Fleet Commander** and **Space Inc** will be released in early 1992 on the Internecine label for the PC, Mac and Amiga.

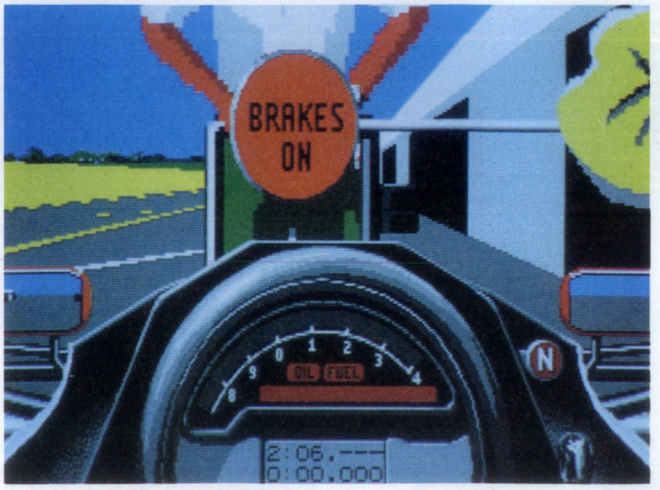
Remember Command Simulations? This was the firm that gave the world **White Death**. Now it's back with **Suez '73**. This is a conventional hex grid wargame with nice little pictures of the units on the counters instead of boring military icons.

Suez '73 should be released in December for the Amiga with the PC version to follow shortly afterwards.

At the end of the day

The show proved that the US still has the edge when it comes to producing quality software. But it is only an edge – Europe is catching up fast. Geoff Crammond's **Formula One Grand Prix** looks set to give **Indy 500** a run for its money and Infograme's **Eternam** looks like one of the more original adventure games around. And Ubi Soft had a strong range, with **Celtic Legends** and **Battle Isle** standing out.

With the vast number of games appearing on both sides of the Atlantic, one can only hope that there are enough users out there to cope with this veritable flood. SP



Team tactics: Formula One Grand Prix

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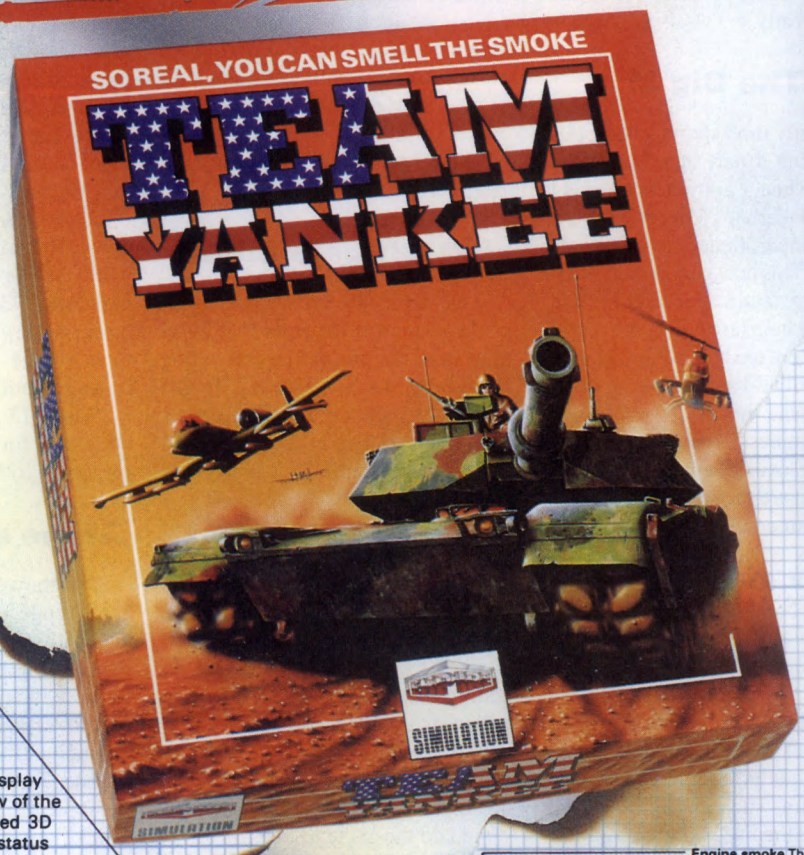
SO REAL YOU CAN SMELL THE SMOKE

THE NO.1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"ROMEO 25 - THIS IS MIKE 77 - SPOT REPORT - 5 T72 TANKS MOVING WEST - GRID 190852 - CONTINUING OVER"

Capt. Sean Bannon snapped his head to the left. There was only one place where the Russians could be, and that was on the hill 2200 metres away. All the training, planning and preparations were over. Team Yankee was about to learn if the team's seventy nine men and twenty five million dollars worth of equipment could do what they were supposed to do.



Team Yankee is designed to test your leadership and tactical skills to the limit. You can display in either **"quadrant mode"** where all four platoons may be controlled at once

or

Full-screen Mode where the display homes in on just one platoon.

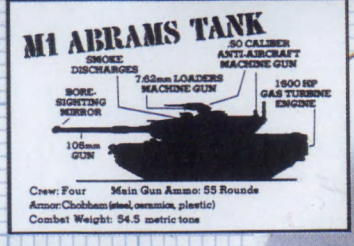
You have the flexibility to display either an overhead map view of the surrounding area, a simulated 3D view of the battlefield, or a status screen showing the performance of all vehicles in a platoon. Irrespective of which screen mode you choose during battle, there is a constant column of information to the right of the screen.

To the right of the compasses are five icons which represent the various types of **weaponry** available to the unit.

MACHINE GUN - which is always available to the player and has an 'infinite' number of rounds.
SMOKE - a smoke grenade which allows enemy vision to be obscured.
HEAT - a high explosive anti-tank round
SABOT - an armor-piercing tungsten shell
TOW - a high-range anti-tank missile

The major capability on the quadrant map screen is to alter the movement and formation of any platoon. The whole of the map may be viewed at once, or you may zoom into any portion of the battlefield using the icons to the right of the map.

Team Yankee is the definitive action simulation of modern tank warfare. Watch scenarios unfold on 3D battlefields with high definition graphics and keep track of the four tank platoons you control using the unique 4 quadrant display. Defend Hill 214 from Yuri Potecknov's crack tank platoons, attack Objective Link through sniper fire from forests, protect the Langen Gap from an entire Soviet tank battalion at night!



Five major scenarios based on the battles featured in the New York Times No. 1 best seller Team Yankee.

EMPIRE SIMULATION

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Atari and ST are trademarks of Atari corp.
Team Yankee, The Novel was written by Harold Coyle. Made in the U.K.

Engine smoke This will prove very useful in confusing your enemy if you find yourself in a tight corner.

Rotation icon and compass display.

Infra red (or thermal) **imaging** This feature is very useful for identifying vehicles camouflaged on the edge of forests. Contary to popular belief the thermal image is green and not red.

Zoom. When this icon is accessed the central portion of the screen is magnified by a factor of 10.

Laser range finder. The range finder will lock on to a reflective target if the firing cursor is placed directly over the object.

Wide formation icon. This increases the spacing between vehicles in your platoon to 100 metres.

Narrow formation icon. This reduces the inter-vehicle spacing in your platoon to 50 metres.

Vee. a vee formation.

Echelon left - places your vehicles on a right to left diagonal relative to your direction.

Wedge - places your vehicles in a wedge formation.

Scroll icon: The four arrows underneath the ETA display allow you to scroll your map in any of the four directions.

Dead Stop icon. This red icon, causes your platoon to come to a dead halt when clicked.

In line - places your vehicles in a line abreast relative to your direction.

Column - places your vehicles in a line ahead relative to your direction.

Echelon right - places your vehicles on a left to right diagonal relative to your direction.

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Reader Service No. 98

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P.J., TX: *SUPERB!* K.H. Canada: *Best computer wargame I've ever played—very realistic...* P.T., Japan: *This simulation is in a class by itself...* G.S., PA: *MORE! MORE!* G.N., CA: *REALISM! GOOD SCENARIOS!* P.C., England: *The whole ACTION STATIONS! package is excellent!* S.M., WA: *Elegant system—A+ manual!* N.S., CA: *GREAT PRODUCT!* R.W., IL: *Favorite Game: ACTION STATIONS!*

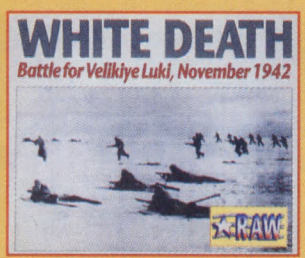
Action Stations! A Naval Surface Combat Tactical Simulation is unique—a combat modeling system designed by an active-duty naval officer to test computerized tactical decision support systems has been adapted into a commercial simulation of unparalleled accuracy and authenticity.

ACTION STATIONS!

S.N., MN: *Favorite game: BLITZKRIEG*
T.Z., CA: *It's terrific fun!* P.M., AS: *I'm a stickler for accuracy & complexity—so Blitzkrieg is good!*
S.S., CA: *It's a great game...*

BLITZKRIEG

German tanks since dawn have been thrusting into Allied lines at points over a 60-mile front from the River Roer to Luxembourg. The Germans are pressing forward fanatically with an order of the day from von Rundstedt saying: "Now is the time for the German Army to strike. Give your all in one last effort. Everything is at stake!"



WHITE DEATH

D.T., WA: *Fine game!* P.M., AS: *WHITE DEATH; complex & accurate.*
J.Z., NC: *VERY interesting...*
T.M., MI: *Love the game—hats off to the A.I.*

The Russian Front, winter 1942. As the German Sixth Army slowly starves in the devasted city of Stalingrad, the Soviets have launched a second onslaught against the Wehrmacht. In a Moscow radio broadcast, the Russians announced their objective: Encircle and destroy the German garrison entrenched at the vital rail junction of Velikiye Luki. General Perkayev's Third Shock Army has been assigned the mission.

GRIFFON SOFTWARE & GAMES, Campbell, CA: *Looking forward to getting it on our shelves!*
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Produced by the designers of* White Death & Blitzkrieg. *With better graphics and game play, this one is sure to be a direct hit!

SUEZ '73

WORLDS ATWAR

F.D., IL: *Love the variations in play!* J.B., CA: *Very Interesting—addictive!* B.C., NJ: *Like the "design your own" strategies!*
J.C., TX: *Pretty fun—enjoy it!*

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RAW

SOFTWARE SHUFFLE

Philip Murphy deals the cards

The Big Deal is Accolade's latest tasty three-game compilation, comprising Cribbage King/Gin King, Ante Up (at the Friday Night Poker Club) and Trump Castle.

Cribbage King/Gin King is (surprise, surprise) a pair of programs which will take the place of a human opponent in these well-known and popular two-player card games.

As an aside, the booklet does mention the more popular variants of cribbage and provides options for the four-player variant (three computer opponents) and five-card cribbage. But it completely ignores the multi-player versions of gin! That said, if you have at least one buddy with you, why would you bother with the computer program anyway?

Shark alert!

The computer plays a competent game of cribbage, but not a great one. One of the computer opponents (Shark - the world's toughest computerized cribbage player) managed to give me a fair run for my money, but that's all. I don't consider myself to be a great player, so goodness knows what an expert would have done to this toothless hammerhead.

Having said that, at least the program doesn't cheat. The four player version provided me with hours of fun, as I whined incessantly at my partner's (perceived) mistakes.

Strong gin

Gin King, by comparison, seems to be an excellent program (perhaps it does cheat!) and I found myself quite unable to master even the second worst computer opponent. In this program, playing Shark – now the world's toughest computerized gin player – for money would be a serious error of judgment.

With six computer opponents, excellent VGA graphics and full help, tutor and analysis screens, this suite is a worthwhile addition to any card-player's library, especially if he wants to brush up on gin.

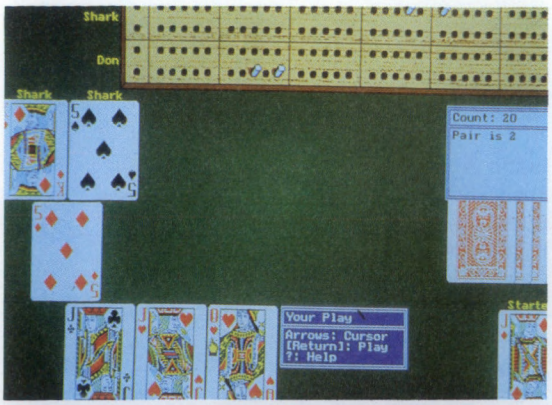
By comparison, Trump Castle was old, stale and poor. The graphics are unexceptional and the program is not fully mouse-controlled. The player is given the option to visit one of six gaming areas: craps, video poker, blackjack, roulette, slots and keno (British readers might like to be reminded that this is a glorified version of bingo).

The last three are games of pure chance, so I'll ignore them except to say that the roulette table has a maximum overall betting limit on it. Not, I hasten to add, a maximum limit on any individual bet (which I've seen in casinos) but a maximum limit on the total value of all the bets you lay on the table. This is most irritating, especially when that limit is $500 and you carry a number of $500 chips with you!

I gave up playing the blackjack program when I started to get the impression that the house was cheating. That, combined with the awful graphics, did it for me.

The video poker machine game randomly decides when it is going to allow the player to hold cards, thus turning it into a true one-armed bandit.

I had great hopes for craps, since this is the game which in real life provides 33% of my income, only to find that it too had a maximum total of bets limit, and that it would allow any amount of odds to be taken on win bets. Suffice it to say that double odds tables are



Play hard, play fast: Cribbage King (top), Ante Up (above) and Casino (facing page)

hard enough to come by in real life – if anyone knows of a real-life unlimited odds table, please write to me immediately (c/o the editor).

The real gem in this package is Ante Up (at the Friday Night Poker Club), a true simulation of a good old poker session with any four of eight computer opponents. Although each of the players has his or her own style, all of them are proficient at reading the cards, smelling bluffs, trying to run a streak of luck, and so on. I found the game truly entertaining with excellent replay value.

Captain's advice

The poker variants available are five-card stud, seven-card stud, five-card draw and Texas hold 'em. Full tutorials and play advice are available from 'The Captain', and the graphics are a real delight. The computer players are all prone to make the odd comment here and there, and this really helps to create the full flavour of a poker game. I found myself playing for long periods of time (actually, struggling to stay in the game would be more appropriate) without realizing how much time was passing. Despite a lot of use, I've still to break all the four players at the table.

I like playing poker – it's one of my favourite pastimes. Consequently, I loaded this program up having already decided that it was going to be nothing like real poker. How wrong I was! Ante Up alone is worth the price of the pack.

Casino is the UK title of what is **Trump Castle II**, Accolade presumably reckoning that the eponymous larger-than-life Trump is something of a nonentity in the UK. The program now features multi-player capabilities along with digitized photographs and sound, and bundled in there is a Trump Castle Discount Coupon (wowee!). Has the program improved since the original version? Well, the photographs certainly make it a lot more cutesy, and it is now possible to wander around Trump Castle and see the pool, bar, nightclub, restaurant, a guest bedroom and so on. The casino bus even turns up to deposit you back in Palookaville when run you've out of dough.

Of the games, five of them are still the same, but keno has been replaced with baccarat. Apart from some tidying graphically, the gambling is much the same as it was in the original – lots of little niggling faults that detract from what should be an enjoyable pastime. For instance, unlimited odds still apply at the craps table.

Stale turkey

For me, there was just nothing in this program of interest. I didn't feel as if the fun, tension and excitement of a casino was being transferred. The programming still seemed old and stale and, having the original Trump Castle at my fingertips to compare, it looked to me as if a quick update had been performed by an apprentice programmer in his coffee break. For someone who hasn't been to a casino, this program might be fun, but I doubt it. A real turkey, I'm afraid.

As I'm discussing gambling simulation programs, I'd like to mention this one before I close. As you are probably aware, blackjack is the only game in a casino in which the odds actually favour the player. This is why if the house gets a whiff that someone is counting cards at a blackjack table, that player will be out the door (at best).

The same house, however, is happy to provide pen and paper for players to record the last zillion spins of a roulette wheel.

To win vast sums of cash at a blackjack table, all that is required is a full working knowledge of the game and its odds, the ability to memorize two running counts simultaneously, and a casual demeanour that implies the inability to count sheep (being slightly intoxicated helps here).

Blackjack will provide you with the former, lock, stock and barrel. As far as I can see, it is a complete tutor, missing nothing at all. Use this program for a week before going to play blackjack and you'll be one third of the way towards millionaire status!

Full advice, help and analysis options are available, with analysis being particularly useful. After a session, the player can view how he played against the 'correct' plays, and consequently see at a glance what areas of his game need improving.

All-in-all **Blackjack** is a little gem; it's invaluable to the serious, experienced gambler and fun-loving novice alike. Don't miss it. SP

THE BIG DEAL

Published by
Capstone

Distributed by
Accolade

Systems
IBM PC and Amiga

PC graphics
EGA, VGA

Supports
Keyboard and mouse; Ante Up supports Covox Speech Thing

CASINO

Produced by
Capstone

Distributed by
Accolade

Systems
IBM PC and Amiga

PC graphics
CGA, EGA, VGA, MCGA, Tandy

Supports
Adlib sound board; keyboard, mouse and joystick

BLACKJACK

Published by
Masque (formerly Microace)

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
MDA, CGA, EGA, VGA, MCGA, PS2, Hercules

Supports
Keyboard and mouse

Notes
For information on how to obtain this game write to: Masque Publishing, PO Box 5223, Englewood, Colorado 80155

STRATEGY PLUS

INDEX FOR ISSUES 1-12

REVIEWS

Strategy

Issue 1
Guns or Butter
Storm Across Europe
Centurion
Imperium
Breach 2
Imperium
Action Stations

Issue 2
Ports of Call
Overrun
Supremacy
Xyphos
Welltris
Star Control
The Ancient Art of War
Team Yankee
Ancient Battles

Issue 3
Ishido
Blitzkrieg May 1940
Bandit Kings of Ancient China
Battlechess II
Covert Action

Issue 4
Jones in the Fast Lane
Genghis Khan
Moonbase
White Death
Railroad Empire
Stratego
The Final Conflict
Hidden Agenda

Issue 5
UMS II
Powermonger
MUDS
Carthage
Blitzkrieg Battle of the Ardennes
Lightspeed
The Ancient Art of War at Sea
Battletech 2
Command HQ

Issue 6
Warlords
Elite Plus
Typhoon of Steel
Shanghai II
Harpoon Battleset 1 and the Scenario Editor

Issue 7
Scrabble
Betrayal
Escape from Colditz
Nobunaga's Ambition 2
Feudal Lords
Worlds at War
Harpoon Battleset 2

Issue 8
Merchant Colony
Speedball 2
Lexi-Cross
Cohort
'Nam
Gettysburg
Fire Brigade
Rebel Charge at Chickamuga
Red Lightning
Main Battle Tank
Harpoon Battleset 3

Issue 9
Afrika Corps
Arnhem
Go
Medieval Lords
Pacific Storm
Superpower 6
Sea Bat 6

Issue 10
Armour-Geddon
Brigade Commander
Champion of the Raj
Third Reich
Germ Crazy

Issue 11
Castles
Halls of Montezuma
Midwinter II
Cardinal of the Kremlin
Charge of the Light Brigade
Conflict: Middle East
Planet Editor for UMS II

Issue 12
Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe
Armada 2525
Sarakon
Robosport
Armour Alley
Napoleon I

Adventure

Issue 1
Neuromancer
Universe III

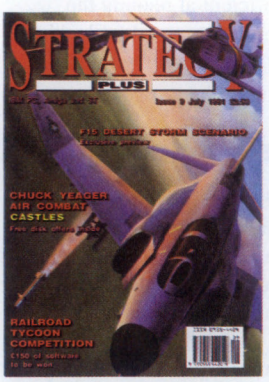
Issue 2
Search for the King
Loom
Secret of the Silver Blades
Circuits Edge
Corporation
Wonderland
Time Machine
King's Bounty
Operation Stealth

Issue 3
The Immortal
Buck Rogers
Final Battle
Carmen San Diego (Where in the World is, Where in Europe is, Where in the USA is)
Legend of Faerghail
The Legend of Monkey Island

Issue 4
Murders in Space
Cadaver
Space 1889
Fountain of Dreams
Tunnels and Trolls
Altered Destiny

Issue 5
Prince of Persia
Elvira
The Savage Empire
Spirit of Excalibur
The Omnicron Conspiracy

Issue 6
Lord of the Rings
Bard's Tale III
Trial by Fire
Rise of the Dragon
Bane of the Cosmic Forge
Countdown
Kings Quest V



Issue 7
Spellcasting 101
BAT
Twin Peaks Confidential (the spoof)

Issue 8
Space Quest IV
Death Knights of Krynn
Eye of the Beholder

Zork II
Megatraveller I
Issue 9
Humbug
The Killing Cloud
Chaos in Andromeda

Issue 10
Martian Dreams
Demoniak
Heart of China
Timequest

Issue 11
Might and Magic III
Magnetic Scrolls Collection

Issue 12
Enchanter
Deadline
Sorcerer
Gateway to the Savage Frontier
Megatraveller 2

Simulations

Issue 1
Dragonstrike
Harley Davidson
Flight of the Intruder

Issue 2
Silent Service II
Wings
Stormovik

Issue 4
ATFII

Issue 5
Blue Max
Das Boot
Aircraft and Scenery Designer
Knights of the Sky

Issue 6
Sim City Architecture Disks 1 & 2
Red Baron

Issue 7
Sim Earth
MiG 29

Issue 8
Tower FRA

Issue 9
F-29 Retaliator
Life and Death II
Jetfighter II
3D Construction Kit

Issue 10
Airline Transport Pilot

Issue 11
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat

Issue 12
F-14 Tomcat
A-10 Tank Killer ver 1.5
Thunderhawk AH-73M

Sports

Issue 1
Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Golf
PGA Golf

Issue 2
Cricket Captain

Issue 4
Links

Issue 7
Tournament Golf

Issue 8
Omni Play Horse Racing Data Disks
Pro Tennis Tour 2
Joe Montana Football
International Ice Hockey

Issue 9
3D Football
European Soccerleague

Issue 11
Mario Andretti's Racing Challenge
Manchester United Europe
RBI2 Baseball
Cricket
Robin Smith's International Cricket
Challenge Golf

Issue 12
Dream Team

DESIGN NOTES

Issue 2
David Pringle on Team Yankee

Issue 3
Arnold Hendrick on Silent Service II

Issue 5
Matthew Stibbe on 'Nam

Issue 9
Bruce Shelley on Railroad Tycoon
Ezra Sidran on UMS II

Issue 11
Christy Marx talks about Conquests of the Longbow

Issue 12
Chris Crawford on Patton Strikes Back
Thomas Carbone on Rules of Engagament

STRATEGY HINTS AND TIPS

Issue 1
Railroad Tycoon

Issue 2
Reach for the Stars

Issue 3
Stellar Crusade
Breach 2

Issue 4
Imperium
M1 Tank PLatoon
Harpoon
Imperium

Issue 5
F-19 Stealth Fighter
Powermonger

Issue 6
Second Front part 1
Knights of the Sky

Issue 7
Second Front part 2

Issue 9
Eye of the Beholder

Issue 10
BAT
Wing Commander

Issue 11
Warlords
Genghis Khan
Martian Dreams walk-through part 1

Issue 12
ATP
Chuck Yeager's Air Combat
Martian Dreams walk-through part 2
Timequest walk-through part 1

INTERVIEWS

Issue 5
Chris Crawford

Issue 6
Ezra Sidran
Roberta Williams

Issue 7
Will Wright

Issue 8
Joe Montana

Issue 12
David Eastman (Floor 13)

SPECIAL FEATURES

Issue 1
On-line with Sierra

Issue 2
Around the world in 80 ways – Sublogic special

Issue 3
The Ultima story

Issue 4
1990 round-up

Issue 5
New maps of Erewhon 1

Issue 6
The art of artificial intelligence
Winter CES report

Issue 7
Sports special
Rails West retrospective

Issue 8
Shareware strategy
Wargames briefing

Issue 9
The ABC of PCs

Issue 10
Strategy on the Gameboy
The choice is yours – player choice in strategy games and computer role-playing games
New maps of Erewhon 2
Summer CES report

Issue 12
MULE retrospective
Sheep may safely graze

Lovingly compiled by Brian Walker (Grrr).

Back issues

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Telephone Select Subscriptions on 0442 876661. All payments must be made in sterling.

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Telephone Strategy Plus Inc on 800 283 3542 or fax 802 767 4623.

THE SPORTS LOCKER

Joseph McCullough takes up the manager's challenge

Toronto, Can (SP). The Toronto Blue Jays took an early four-run lead in the first innings and never looked back as they pummelled the Los Angeles Dodgers 15–6 to win the 1991 World Series. Tom Candiotti went eight full innings to secure the win, while Ramon Martinez only lasted 1 1/3 innings for Los Angeles.

Today is 8 August, 1991, some two full months before the league championships begin, so how can anyone already know the outcome of the World Series, not to mention the winning and losing pitchers? The answer doesn't require a clairvoyance spell or even a time machine. All it requires is the power of **Micro League Baseball – The Manager's Challenge**, the resources of *USA Today* and a bit of preparation.

The Manager's Challenge is a third-generation baseball simulation produced by the MicroLeague Sports Association, maker of statistically accurate sports games. It retains the flavour of the original **Micro League Baseball**, but adds a comprehensive statistics compiler, more statistical categories, improved AI, and greater managerial control. The program comes complete with rosters from 26 of baseball's greatest teams, but also allows the player to input statistics for any team, past or present.

All of these features make **The Manager's Challenge** the perfect program to use to forecast game outcomes.

USA Today's sports section has proven to be the best and most accessible source for current Major League Baseball statistics. American League statistics are published each Tuesday, and National League statistics each Wednesday. In addition, *USA Today's Baseball Weekly*, a stand-alone publication, includes even more in-depth team profiles and statistics.

The information in these two sources is more than enough to provide any baseball fan with a complete run-down of every player in the big leagues today.

Base desires

The Manager's Challenge provides 26 statistical categories for batters, and 28 for pitchers. On each team there are 15 batters, 10 pitchers and five other player positions that can be defined either way. A full team requires the input of roughly 800 player statistics, while a full league requires a total of approximately 20 800 different attributes.

To predict the World Series winner as accurately as possible, I first entered each required statistic and role for every active Major League Baseball player. I only overlooked those players for which *USA Today* did not have complete data.

Once the leagues were complete, I scanned the current disabled list and deactivated the injured players. I subsequently reactivated them when their time on the disabled list expired. Unfortunately there is no way of predicting injuries, so any additions to the disabled list between now and the end of the season were ignored.

Heavy seasoning

With the rosters set, I used **The Manager's Challenge** to play out the rest of the season, from 8 August through the World Series. After reading a cover story about division championship contenders in *USA Today* (6 August), I decided to play out only the schedule of those teams within 10 games of the division leader.

The current standings on 8 August are shown in Table 1. The dots repre-

Table 1: Standings as of 8 August

AL EAST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Toronto	62	46	—
Detroit	55	52	6.5
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NL EAST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Pittsburgh	62	43	—
St Louis	57	49	5.5
New York	56	50	6.5
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AL WEST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Minnesota	65	44	—
Chicago	61	45	2.5
Oakland	61	48	4.0
Texas	56	48	6.5
Seattle	57	51	7.5
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.

NL WEST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
LA	60	46	—
Atlanta	56	49	3.5
Cincinnati	52	53	7.5
SF	51	55	9
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.

sent teams that were too far out of first place to be considered.

The Manager's Challenge game configuration screen has three play options: normal, quick or series. Since Major League baseball games are always played in groups, series play was the logical choice for this simulation. **TMC** allows from two to nine games to be played in a series. I followed each team's set schedule to determine the series length.

Setting options

On the configuration screen, the player can also exercise the designated hitter option and decide the pitching rotation (four-man or five-man).

As in real baseball, I chose the designated hitter option for American League games, and a five-man pitching rotation for all teams except those that did not have five active starting pitchers.

After simulating all games, the final division standings were as shown in Table 2.

What was a close race in the AL East between Toronto and Detroit turned into a cake-walk for Toronto. The AL West stayed close to the end, with Texas overtaking both Oakland and Seattle to move into third. The NL East remained roughly the same, but the NL West was quite a battle. Los Angeles edged Atlanta by only one game. Cincinnati continued its current slide, as did San Francisco.

All championships, including the World Series, are seven game series with a two-three-two format. This year the AL West winner (Minnesota) and NL East winner (Pittsburgh) have home field advantage.

No advantage

In the simulation, however, each visiting team quickly took this advantage away by winning the first two games. In the American League the series went to six games, with Toronto winning games one, two, four and six. In the National League, Los Angeles swept the Pirates four games to none.

The American League has home field advantage this season, so Los Angeles travelled to Toronto for the first two games. Toronto won the first game 11–4, with Tom Candiotti earning the win. Ramon Martinez was the losing pitcher for Los Angeles.

Table 2: Final standings

AL EAST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Toronto	98	64	—
Detroit	88	74	10.0
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NL EAST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Pittsburgh	88	74	—
St Louis	83	79	4.5
New York	80	82	8.0
.	.	.	.
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AL WEST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
Minnesota	91	71	—
Chicago	89	73	2.0
Texas	84	78	7.0
Oakland	82	80	9.0
Seattle	78	84	13.0
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.

NL WEST

Team	Wins	Losses	GB
LA	92	70	—
Atlanta	91	71	1.0
Cincinnati	82	80	10.0
SF	79	83	13.0
.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.

Game two saw Los Angeles score three runs in the top of the second innings to take the lead for good. Toronto threatened in the third by scoring two runs, but LA exploded in the top of the fourth for five runs. Final score: LA 14, Toronto 7. Morgan was the winning pitcher for LA, while Key took the loss for Toronto.

Crowd puller

Games three through five were played before an average of 53 000 fans in Los Angeles. LA won game three 9–6 behind the bat of Juan Samual. Samual drove in four runs, and was perfect from the plate. Crews picked up the win for LA, while Timlin was charged with the loss for the Blue Jays.

Toronto came charging back to win the next two games in LA, 3–1 and 11–10. Dave Wells was the winning pitcher in game four, Bob Ojeda the loser.

In game five, Juan Guzman started for Toronto, but only lasted 5 2/3 innings. Todd Stottlemyre earned the win in a relief role. Likewise, Orel Hershiser started for LA, but Jim Gott picked up the loss.

The venue shifted back to the Great White North for game six, where the Blue Jays blasted the Dodgers 15–6 to win the World Series. LA scored five runs at the top of the ninth, but it was not enough to prevent the American League champions from winning their first world championship.

Is it possible accurately to predict the outcome of the Major League season purely by crunching numbers? Only time will tell. Statistics are a major part of baseball, and have been used by players themselves to predict the outcome of game situations. In fact, Orel Hershiser consulted a database of past performance against certain hitters during the 1988 World Series.

None the less, the human element cannot be discounted. No matter how great a player may appear on paper, he can still get injured or become mired in a hitting slump. Even more important at times than player performance is manager decision-making. PC artificial intelligence is good, but not good enough to be 100% accurate.

Close finish

What all this tells us is that computers and computer games are not a perfect substitute for the real thing. They can come close – in fact Toronto may indeed win the World Series four games to two over Los Angeles – but simple fate and human nature will always prevail SP

MICRO LEAGUE BASEBALL – THE MANAGER'S CHALLENGE

Published by
Micro League Sports

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA

Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball

The yield of dreams

By Joseph McCullough

Designed by
Don Daglow

Published by
SSI

UK distributor
US Gold

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
EGA, VGA

Supports
Sound Blaster, Adlib and Roland sound boards; joystick and keyboard

Players
1–2

Notes
Hard disk required

Strategic Simulations Inc is renowned for its sophisticated fantasy role-playing games and combat simulations. Now it has entered the sports games market with the release of **Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball**, a statistics-based baseball simulation inspired by the most successful manager in Oakland A's history.

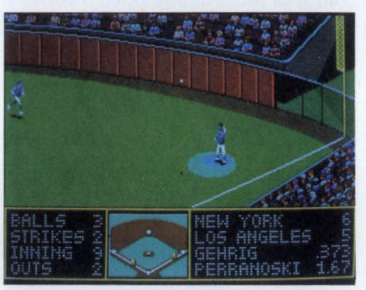
As a first effort, **Ultimate Baseball** is impressive. The attention to detail at times is astounding; yet there are a few inexplicable oversights in this otherwise excellent game that keep **Ultimate Baseball** from being the 'ultimate' baseball simulation that it claims to be.

Ultimate Baseball offers the player a remarkable line-up of selections. In fact, the ability to customize so many aspects of game play is one of **Ultimate Baseball's** best qualities. First, the player can choose either an exhibition or league game. Exhibition games do not affect league standings or statistics, so they give the player a chance to polish game-playing and managerial skills before competing for the title. League play offers even more choices. The player can choose a full 162-game season, an 81-game season, or five, four, three, two, or one-game round-robin schedules.

Once a league format is chosen, it is possible to page through the pre-designed schedule and mark 'featured' games in which to participate. Any and all games can be marked as featured, so the one is not restricted to playing each scheduled game, or managing a single team throughout the season (although this is also supported). If no featured games are marked, the computer will simulate the entire season, updating all player stats.

SSI states that an entire 162-game season can be simulated in this manner in under three hours. If the current day's schedule does not include a featured game, then the choice is offered to a play to featured game off the league menu. This choice instructs the computer to simulate all games up to the next scheduled featured game.

Before each game the 'ground rules' screen can be viewed. This is where the type of control, difficulty and input to be used for each team is set. The ground rules screen is also



where a choice is made between a full game or highlights (one pitch a batter). For exhibition games, the ground rules screen also includes a designated hitter choice.

Ultimate Baseball allows three different types of player control: play and manage, manage only, and computer plays and manages. If the user plays and manages, one of three difficulty levels for the action sequences must be chosen. The all star difficulty level maximizes arcade action. Pitching, batting, base-running and fielding are all player controlled.

Pro mode is like all star mode except the computer handles most of the fielding chores. The player only controls where to throw the ball once the computer has made the catch.

Rookie level is designed for beginners. Pitching and batting are human controlled, but when batting, the computer pitcher throws down the middle on every pitch. The computer handles all base-running and fielding as well, but the player still controls where to throw the ball.

In addition to the wide array of game options available in **Ultimate Baseball**, SSI has also included a complete array of utilities to make the game even more powerful and enjoyable. No self-respecting baseball simulation would be complete without the ability to enter and edit player statistics, and **Ultimate Baseball** is no exception. Forty-nine batting, 14 fielding and 44 pitching statistics can be reviewed and edited for each team. The game comes packaged with fantasy teams comprised of some of baseball's best all-stars. Unlike other simulations, **Ultimate Baseball** does not include complete teams from a certain era. Instead, the clubs included in the game consist of great players from all eras. So, for example, the Cincinnati Reds team includes players from the 'Big Red Machine' days, as well as greats such as catcher Ernie Lombardi of the 1938 Reds.

Streak it lucky

In addition to player and team editing, **Ultimate Baseball** also supports a player draft so that the fantasy baseball fan can create his own league of all-time greats.

These game utilities make **Ultimate Baseball** a well-rounded simulation. There is one problem, though. Player and team statistics can

be edited, but not printed. The only information that can be printed is the box score after each game. Even then, only dot- matrix printers are supported. Those with laser printers are out of luck.

As might be expected from a game published by SSI, **Ultimate Baseball's** greatest attribute is its unparalleled statistical modelling. Don Daglow, the game's designer, began work on the fundamental modelling code in 1971 when he simulated baseball games on a mainframe computer. He improved the system over the years, and his efforts are well executed in **Ultimate Baseball**.

Like similar programs, **Ultimate Baseball** takes historical player statistics into account when determining game outcomes. **Ultimate Baseball**, however, considers additional player attributes that have never really been fully implemented in any baseball simulation. Players are rated on how well they play in 'clutch' situations. They are also given a streak rating, which determines if they play consistently all season, or are more or less effective during certain months of the season. Players are also assigned an injury rating. The higher the rating, the less likely an injury will occur. Finally, if a team member is seldom used but has excellent stats, the game will adjust his abilities accordingly if he is used as a starter throughout the season.

Rock and soul

All of this attention to detail makes for rock-solid realism during game play, which is enhanced by excellent animation and graphics. Player movement is fluid, especially the pitcher's rhythm as he winds up for the pitch. Also impressive is the way the fielders back each other up during a defensive play. If a pop fly is hit to right centre field, the right fielder will drift over to help out with the catch. Again, SSI's hard work shines through.

The graphics are authentic as well. Details such as the player's skin tone, the criss-cross of the grass on a natural turf field, and true team colours add a finishing touch to the game.

Sound Blaster card owners get digitized calls by the umpire, which is nice, but can get irritating after a while. Others have to deal with sound through the PC speaker, which is adequate at best. Fortunately, sound can be disabled.

The action controls during gameplay are intuitive, and need not be mentioned here. **Ultimate Baseball**, however, does include some innovations that are worth noting. Whenever the ball is hit, a cursor follows it across the field. The larger the cursor, the higher the ball is in the air. When playing at all star level, the cursor location is where the player should position his fielder in order to make a successful catch. If the ball is too far away, the joystick button can be pressed to make the fielder jump or dive for the ball.

Wind factor

Wind direction and velocity is also a factor in fielding. The ball and cursor will drift noticeably if a strong wind is blowing through the outfield.

When in all star mode, one of **Ultimate Baseball's** few shortcomings is exposed. Fielding is extremely difficult, even with the help of the fly ball cursor. Even when the player positions his fielder within the cursor area, this does not guarantee that a catch will be made (although it should). The game requires the outfielder to be placed exactly in the middle of the cursor to make a catch. Furthermore, the keyboard is a clumsy means of moving a player; moving with a joystick connected to a fast machine (386) is frustrating. The joystick is much too sensitive to be usable. Unfortunately, a mouse is not supported in **Ultimate Baseball**, so there is no other input choice to try if the player is frustrated when using the keyboard or a joystick.

The solution to this problem is to use the pro or rookie difficulty level, or to simply manage only and let the computer handle all of the arcade action. However, this does not overlook the fact that the controls in all star mode are far too difficult to master.

Its no secret that good team management is one of the most crucial elements of a successful baseball club, and **Ultimate Baseball's** designers consulted one of the best managers in the business when creating the game. What's surprising then is that the management abilities in **Ultimate Baseball** are its weakest link.

Pre-game managing is among the best I have seen in a baseball simulation, but during the game, the player does not have enough data at his disposal to make crucial decisions. Before each game one has complete control over team rosters and line-ups. There is even an ability to set different line-ups against right-handed pitchers and left-handed pitchers. **Ultimate Baseball** gets high marks for versatility for adding this feature.

Also included is a list of reserve players from which to tap if a starter gets injured. During the game the player can position the defence and call most types of plays, such as a steal or a pitchout.

There are two serious flaws to the management system that limit **Ultimate Baseball's** appeal as a game for

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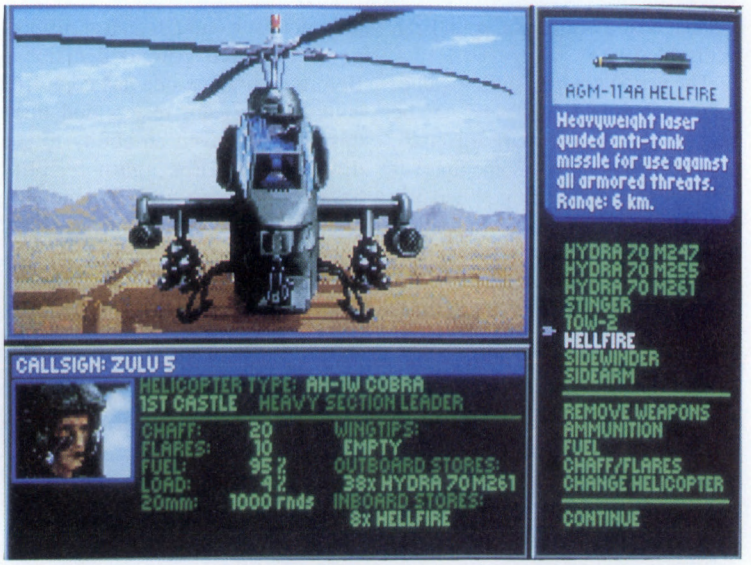
VS.
LOS ANGELES
PITCHER T ERA W
FORD, WHITEY L 2.74 8
BATTING ORDER B AVG P
2B LAZZERI, TONY R .354 10
CF DIMAGGIO, JOE R .381 11
1B GEHRIG, LOU L .373 12
RF RUTH, BABE L .356 12
DH MANTLE, MICKEY S .353 12
C HOWARD, ELSTON R .348 10
LF COMBS, EARLE L .344 10
SS RIZZUTO, PHIL R .324 8
3B ROLFE, RED L .329 9
PITCHER T ERA W
KOUFAX, SANDY L 2.04 12
BATTING ORDER B AVG P
RF KEELER, WILLIE L .368 2
LF DAVIS, TOMMY R .346 9
2B ROBINSON, JACKIE R .342 7
1B HODGES, GIL R .304 11
CF SNIDER, DUKE L .341 11
DH GARVEY, STEVE R .315 9
C CAMPANELLA, ROY R .312 11
3B CEY, RON R .281 9
SS REESE, PEE WEE R .284 8
BENCH
PITCHERS
ACCEPT
PITCHERS
BENCH

the player who values team management over arcade action. Although statistics can be called up for the current batter and pitcher, no information is available for base-runners. Also, since there is no way to print player statistics, team information is unavailable to the would-be manager. Because of this oversight, critical game strategy is often limited to guesswork.

Despite its shortcomings in the management system and the lack of printing and mouse support, **Ultimate Baseball** is a fantastic game. The graphics and animation are first-rate, and the game modelling logic is unsurpassed. Add to that the seemingly endless player options, and SSI seems to have a winner.

Ultimate Baseball will appeal to all but the staunchest fans of management-only baseball simulations. For those who can overlook its few faults, **Ultimate Baseball** will be a welcome addition to their collection. SP



Gunship 2000

Hover in plain sight

By Steven Wartofsky

Designed by
James M Day, Darrell Dennies and Detmar Peterke

Published by
Microprose

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
VGA, EGA

Supports
Roland and Adlib sound boards; keyboard and joystick

Notes
Hard disk mandatory

People I've been chatting with lately have become mighty touchy about what they want from an air combat simulation. With the prospect of being able to do it all looming large as **Falcon 3.0** develops, it seems like nothing less than total flight realism will suffice for these guys.

Me, I'd trade that in a minute for a flight simulator with a highly developed context. And I'd trade it in a nanosecond for a flight simulation like **Gunship 2000**, which provides an ever-unfolding series of dynamic, challenging, and truly subtle tactical situations to work with.

Microprose has always had its strong suit in the realm of tactical and strategic realism; that's what made **F-19** and the original **Gunship** such great hits. **Gunship 2000** fulfils the destiny of that tradition and then some. The multi-helicopter mission planning deserves particular attention as a significant innovation on Microprose's previous flight simulation work and on its ground-breaking work in **M-1 Tank Platoon**.

But first the basics. A backward glance over travelled roads will reveal that one of the great hopes of fans of the original **Gunship** was that some day the graphics and sound in that design would be significantly enhanced to provide the kind of 3D animated excitement of, say, something like **Jetfighter II** or the more recent scenery that people have been designing with **Flight Simulator 4.0 Aircraft and Scenery Designer**.

Side step

Rather than being locked into that expectation, Microprose seems to have taken a side step and come up with something else instead, something perhaps more important to a map-of-the-earth helicopter design. **Gunship 2000** features 3D terrain that competes quite effectively with what's found in **A-10 Tank Killer Version 1.5**.

What this means is that there are great, long roads cut into deep gorges in mountain ranges; hills and mountains and cliff bluffs along the shoreline; river beds to duck into and bridges to zip across and under; long rises in the terrain that hide targets from view until the last moment. In other words, scenery that really works in three dimensions.

This is a major accomplishment. One of the significant factors in scenery design until now has been that for all the prettiness or collision logic present in even the best of it, the fact that the terrain is fundamentally flat undermines expectations in important ways.

Gut level

There is none of the tension of, say, being trapped in a mountain gorge unable to get out because there are opponents on either side just waiting to target and take aim. Nor is there that significant deflection of the original flight plans owing to terrain features that prevent a more direct route. No ability, really, to hide behind a mountain and slowly creep up to a hover just high enough to peer over into the next valley in the hopes of finding the assigned Primary Objective. All of this is gut-level stuff, and it's all there in **Gunship 2000**.

That's just for starters. Digging through the training and single flight assignments, the player will finally reach the flight group and campaign modes. Here's where **Gunship 2000** really distinguishes itself.

Starting with a mission orders and group command interface that builds upon the best strengths of those present in **M1 Tank Platoon**, this simulation gives the player a chance to lead a flight group of five choppers, which can be broken up into two groups (a light and heavy section) or organized as a single patrol unit.

Choosing the right mix of helicopters for a particular mission out of the seven included, outfitting them each with the proper complement of weapons, and then crewing them with capable, competent officers is a whole experience in itself. Familiarity with each helicopter's strengths and weaknesses becomes the first absorbing task, followed by mastering the art of resource management to ensure good teamwork and long-term success.

There are AH-66A LHX gunships and good old Blackhawk troop and cargo carriers, nimble Super Cobras and sharp little Kiowa and Defender scout ships, as well as two versions of

the good old Apache AH-64. What will be needed for each mission? Which ships are going to provide protection; which advance warning; and which essential specialized capability is needed? Not every ship will be available every mission; making do with what comes to hand is sometimes required as well.

Missions take place in two theatres, the Persian Gulf and central Europe, and can start off in a number of different kinds of locations. In the Gulf missions, for instance, the player may begin at a base onshore, or on the flight deck of a carrier posted in the Gulf. There may be refuelling points along the way to the primary and secondary objectives of the mission, or there may be nothing but enemy targets between take-off and return to base.

One of the exciting features of **Gunship 2000** is that the player can never predict what type of mission is likely to come up next. Missions are generated relatively randomly by the system (except for the campaign game, where they are linked more logically to each other, but still in great variety and in continually changing ways).

There are day missions, night missions, missions on incredibly windy or hot days or nights, recon, deep strike, tactical support and search and rescue missions, missions focused on fixed targets at known locations, and other especially challenging missions, based on reports of last-known locations for moving targets that might not have followed command's predictions of where they're likely to be heading.

Eat the riches

All in all, combine this embarrassment of mission riches with the ability to set four different difficulty levels for the opponent forces (even poor units are going to keep players busy for months), and you've got a set of situations various enough to last years. But that's not enough: Microprose plans future disks providing new theatres of operation for **Gunship 2000**, as it has done for its other simulations.

Sound and graphics are up to scratch, and Roland and Sound Blaster sound cards are supported. Microprose is one of the few companies which know how to do great sound effects for the Roland. Digitized speech is included, but for some reason it pauses the whole simulation every time it's accessed, and is thus best turned off after an initial few training missions (it's useful for new pilots to help keep them apprised of what's going on).

Hard times

Gunship 2000 must be installed to hard disk, and takes up about 3.3Mb of disk space. Like many recent 3D flight simulations, slow machines are left far behind. The box claims the game can be played on a 286 running at 12MHz, but that assumes a rather Buddha-like patience on the part of the player. It would be more realistic to suggest that, for full pleasure, the simulation be played on a 386 running at 20MHz minimum. That provides the detail and smoothness of animation necessary for absorbing play.

Unlike most other flight simulators (only **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** comes close in comparison), there's a full-blown strategy game going on here, too, and that steals a lot of cycles away from the CPU which might otherwise be saved up for the visuals and flight modelling.

As for negative points, there are built-in limits to the flight model that some especially partisan fanatics might find objectionable. The design puts a 1500ft ceiling on altitude for all helicopters (most flying in the game is done at 50–100ft off the ground), and doesn't separate tail rotor from cyclic (which would require two joysticks for operation, or joystick and rudder pedals; some people have this stuff, believe me!).

There have been reports of missiles reaching the helicopter through mountains, which, if true, I'm sure Microprose will fix quickly. The out-the-window graphics aren't quite as glossy as some other sims of recent note.

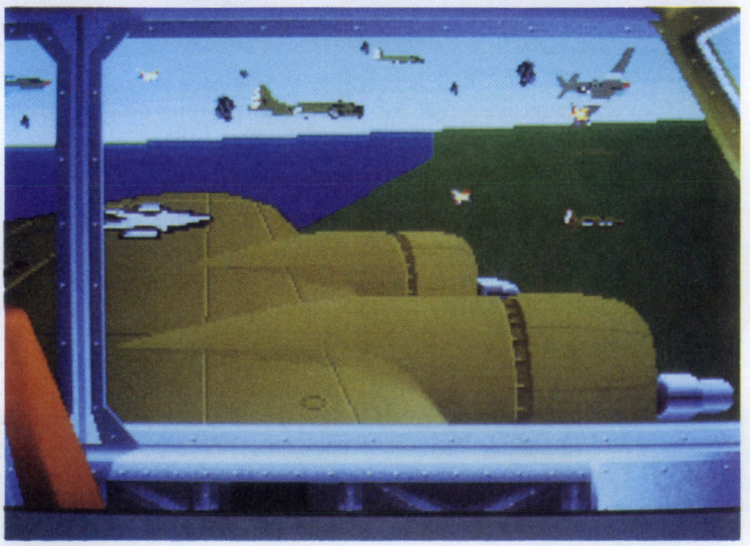
And finally, the joystick routine sometimes gets a little out of kilter when a stiff wind is blowing in from the west (a brief tap of the Alt-J key combination corrects this).

None of these points is significant enough to warrant much annoyance. Lots of people have been waiting to see a sequel to **Gunship**.

Gunship 2000 comes as a surprise, because it fulfils new and different expectations about what a good helicopter air combat simulation should be all about. Taken on its own terms, **Gunship 2000** is a marvellous success. SP

COMMANDER CRUNCH REPORTS FROM THE HANGAR

Commander Crunch helps out on Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe and Megafortress



Bearing up: Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe

Well, it's time to get back in the pilot's seat and go looking for some action again? Would you like a remembrance of things past, or a taste of things to come?

Both are on tap this month, with **Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** available from Lucasfilm Games and **Megafortress** just out from Three-Sixty.

As a veteran of endless simulated airwars, I can tell you there's nothing like a little assistance to make life worth living again. If you need help, ask proudly for it – or just turn to these pages for a few considered hints and tips.

First off, don't go worrying too much about flight model realism in these things. The designers have worked hard to put together a complex, rich experience with enough marked variation in performance to give the player a sense of the strengths and weaknesses present in one plane or another. Lean into the joys of what's there instead of pulling out a protractor to document what's not. That's the best of all the advice you'll get this column, right up front.

In **SWOTL**, let's assume you've gone to flight school and had your fill of training. You've shot down all those sitting ducks, and are now just slightly bloodthirsty. First off, make a point of hitting the M and E keys frequently, to access and exit the overhead map available during missions.

From this map, zoom in to a proper range for the situation, and access each plane individually. Make a note of all locations, bearings and headings.

Remember, bearing is the direction to that plane from your plane, heading is the direction the plane itself is flying in. Get your bearings, in other words, so you can ruin all the Germans' plans (yeah, I can't help but prefer to fly the American side, call me nostalgic).

Bearings and headings also become particularly important when you're planning an attack run in a German fighter on a B-17 bomber group.

A clear sense of what direction the group is flying in, combined with awareness of the direction in which you're going during your attack (swoop down from above like an avenging eagle) helps make recovery from the initial pass more systematic.

All together now

Dive fast past the group firing as you go, get out in front and below a ways, then make a sharp turn to double back on your path for a head-on assault. Don't linger during this approach, as head-on attacks on bombers should be avoided whenever possible. Get back behind the group and climb for another good diving attack. Dive! Turn, stroke, climb. Dive! Turn, stroke, climb. All together now....

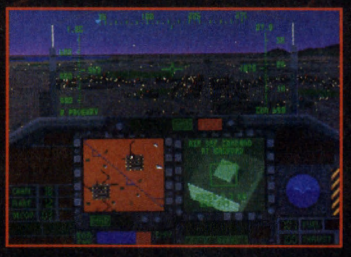
I just adore flying those B-17s. The bombing missions are some of the most complex in the game, yet the Norden bombsight simulated in **SWOTL** makes precision bombing both more manageable and more fun than its equivalents in any of Larry Holland's previous designs. If you're getting bored tootling along on the way, make a point of practising staying in formation; you'll need that when the fighter attacks get hot and heavy.

The closer the formation a bomber group can hold, the more likely all the bombers will make it out in one piece. Expect damage, though; it's rather hard to avoid for an entire bomb run. Conserve ammo so your machine guns can protect the plane both coming and going, otherwise you'll have a nice clean sail into target and then an ugly ride half-way home, with no guarantee of strudel and schnapps from your captors once you've reached ground in your parachute (if you're that lucky).

Flak in previous Lucasfilm designs was always there for show. Not so in **SWOTL**! It will do serious damage to fighters and bombers; if it starts getting heavy, find a way past, around or back out of it quick.

Bombers may not have much choice if a target is heavily defended from the ground; grin and bear it, or

Rule the Desert Skies



Like some sleek, metallic bird of prey, it slices through the thin air of the desert night. Below, the enemy's radar frantically scans, searching for a sign. But the only warning is the deafening roar of ordnance demolishing its target. Before fighters can scramble, this airborne apparition vanishes, like a ghostly dream.

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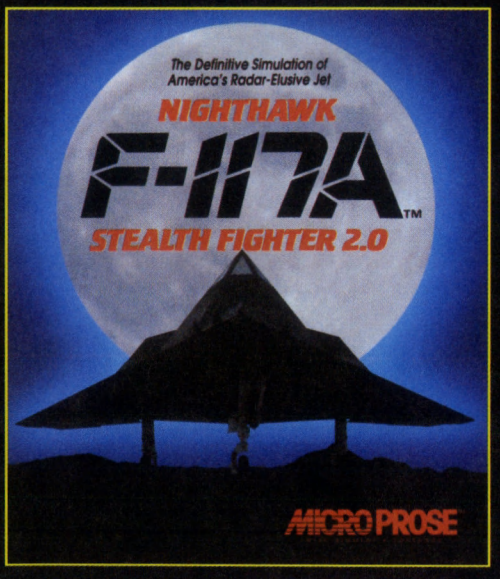

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Reader Service No. 75

Secret Weapons: a well thought out wargame

if you're in campaign mode, plan attacks on those factories most likely to supply parts for artillery first to reduce the chances the Germans will be able to put heavy guard around significant targets.

Which brings me to the last, perhaps most important point about **SWOTL**. Don't go into this one thinking it's just a flight simulation; there's a nicely thought-out wargame planted at the core of this design as well, and you should work hard to become competent at all the planes for a particular side first so you can get a chance to see just how exciting planning and executing a full-scale attack can be here.

Please write in and share any stories you might come up with about a stunning victory or a whopping defeat in campaign mode; I'm sure it'll be a memorable experience either way.

Boot disk

On to **Megafortress**. First, a most important tip without which you might have trouble even starting the game. Have a floppy with a minimal system configuration (no QEMM or EMM386.SYS, no memory management, and so on) to boot from, and if your computer hangs when trying to run **Megafortress**, reboot from this floppy. Like **Jetfighter II**, **Megafortress** gets pernickety about RAM and system configurations. Hopefully Three-Sixty will be working on the problem and have it ironed out soon.

Megafortress moves even further away from the usual expectations one brings to flight simulation on computer (yay!). A real systems-oriented design, you'll find out quickly that it's not the pilot's seat, but the electronic warfare and the offensive weapons posts that gets the real workout.

Just sticking with the Red Flag missions for a moment (that is, the practice runs), try out the radar evasion mission a few times. Notice that you'll have to spend almost all your time at the EW post jamming radar signals as one radar after another picks you up. Remember to click on the small radar screen at this post to target the radar to be jammed; a good technique in a radar-heavy environment is to work a regular, clockwise circle targeting each radar in turn and testing to see if it needs jamming. That way you may get on top of a radar the moment it starts to detect you. Again, this is a very useful skill further down the line.

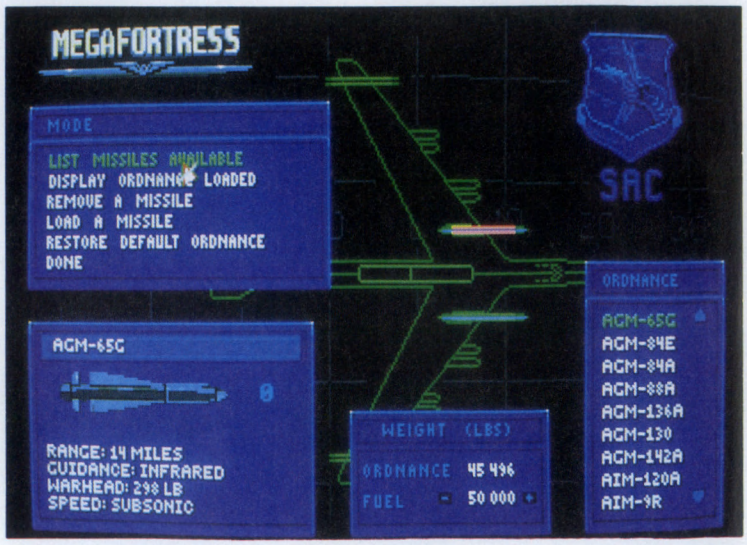
At the OW post, learn to use the camera effectively. This will require getting the degree numbers representing the camera's aim down pat, in both the vertical and horizontal planes. You should be able to know without thinking that –152 degrees is between the six o'clock and nine o'clock positions on your plane, rather than between six o'clock and three o'clock.

Stealthy tactic

When the EW post issues a report of a target sighting, check it out quickly with the attack radar and then look for it with the camera. The attack radar, of course, will blazon 'Here I am!' across the skies to anything equipped with detection equipment, and so must be used sparingly. Remember, the EB-52 bomber is a stealth system; taking any action that conflicts with the stealth technology is a real waste of the machine when it can be avoided.

Above all, make use of the wonderful set of flight plans included with the documentation. There are terrain features that can be taken advantage of under the right circumstances (don't forget to become a master of the terrain avoidance computer, knowing when to turn it off is almost as important as knowing what to set as minimum altitude), but being able to do so derives from a clear knowledge of the terrain prior to beginning a mission. The readiness is all, every step of the way.

Well here we are at the bottom of the column again. Anyone out there with a pfennig for an old vet? See you next time. SP



Megafortress: fussy about the system

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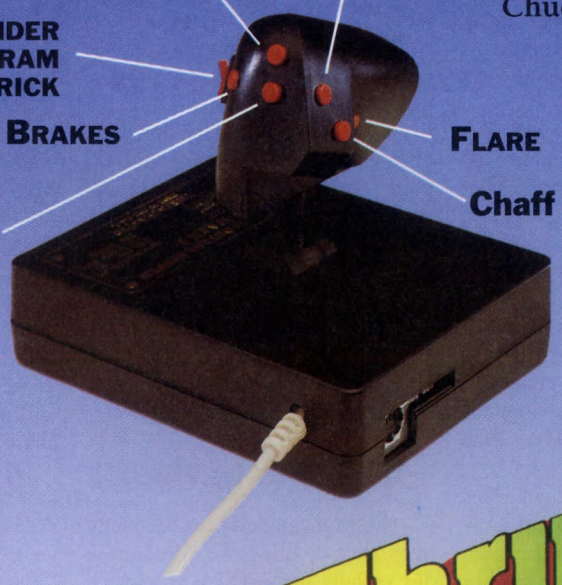

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Reader Service No. 96

Nighthawk F-117A – Stealth Fighter 2.0

Clone, sweet clone

By Paul Rigby

Published by
Microprose

Programmed by
Joe Hellesen and Ed Fletcher with David Mckibbin, Greg Kreafle and Andy Hollis (IBM version)

Systems
IBM PC

PC graphics
VGA, EGA

Supports
Adlib sound board

Notes
Based on the original F-19 stealth fighter by Sid Meier

Nighthawk F-117A – Stealth Fighter 2.0 from Microprose is not so much as new game, but an update to the original and highly successful **F-19 Stealth Fighter**.

Most of the update work was spent on graphic presentation. **F-117A** uses 256-colour VGA; some of the objects had to be recoloured while others had to be rebuilt to accommodate the extra colours.

Because most of the missions are in darkness, night scenery received special attention. A spectacular night sky was produced using a graduated horizon. In addition, the sky lightens and darkens according to what time of day it is.

Also, many lights of various types were added to the ground objects. These switch off depending on whether the plane is in enemy or friendly territory. A FLIR camera was also added. In the darkest of nights it is essential to be able to observe the target and general terrain.

The basic game play of **F-117A** lies unchanged. The player flies his stealth aircraft on a number of strike and air-to-air missions. All pre-flight screens have been redrawn, but they still retain their basic design so they will be familiar to experienced players.

Beginning a mission from a ground base or carrier, the player follows the assigned waypoints to the primary and secondary targets. The main weapon is, as always, the stealthy cloak that the advanced technology affords this angular piece of Teflon.

Once the mission targets have been dispatched the player returns home to receive an in-depth briefing plus a record of points and any medals awarded. This sequence is unchanged from **F-19** except for the improved graphics.

The explosions viewed during the mission strike have been improved by the inclusion of bitmaps, making them far, far better than the miserable excuses seen in **F-19**. Previously, exploding lines and polygons always broke that essential 'suspension of disbelief'.

All shapes, including the external view of the player's aircraft, have been improved. Polygonal shapes have been redrawn or have more polygons in each shape, which results in a more realistic object.

Model behaviour

Two flight models have been fully integrated into the game. Microprose did include the F-117A as a patch after the release of the original F-19. The sequel, however, uses the F-117A to a higher degree.

The external graphics are far more impressive, the cockpit is improved and the game play reflects the F-117A model. For example, the F-117A only has two weapons bays.

All the usual theatres have been included in this new version plus five more worlds have now been added, two from **F15 II** and three new ones. The full list not only includes specific areas but the date that the conflict occurs. It is as follows: the Persian Gulf, 1984; Europe's North Cape, 1985; Libya, 1986; Central Europe, 1986; The Middle East, 1989; Desert Storm, 1991; Vietnam, 1994; Cuba, 1995; and Korea, 1997.

Bricking it

The usual brick of a manual has been included. Many enhancements and improvements have been made to take advantage of the latest information about the F-117A and to cover the flight model used in the game.

The big question is whether the game is worth the money. For anyone who has yet to taste the delights of Microprose's stealth sojourn, the answer is a definite 'yes'. The reply for anyone who has the original program is laden with qualifications. It should be borne in mind that the program contains the same game play and many of the missions and world areas of **F-19**. But if the wallet is willing **F-117A** should be on the purchase list.

The reason is that **F-117A** is a more polished production than **F-19** ever was. The enemy is more intelligent. There are five new game worlds – so it is possible to look at the reintroduction of the original worlds as an added bonus.

As usual Microprose has come up with the definitive simulation of this particular aircraft. Any software houses thinking of producing an F-117A simulation will now do so at their peril. SP

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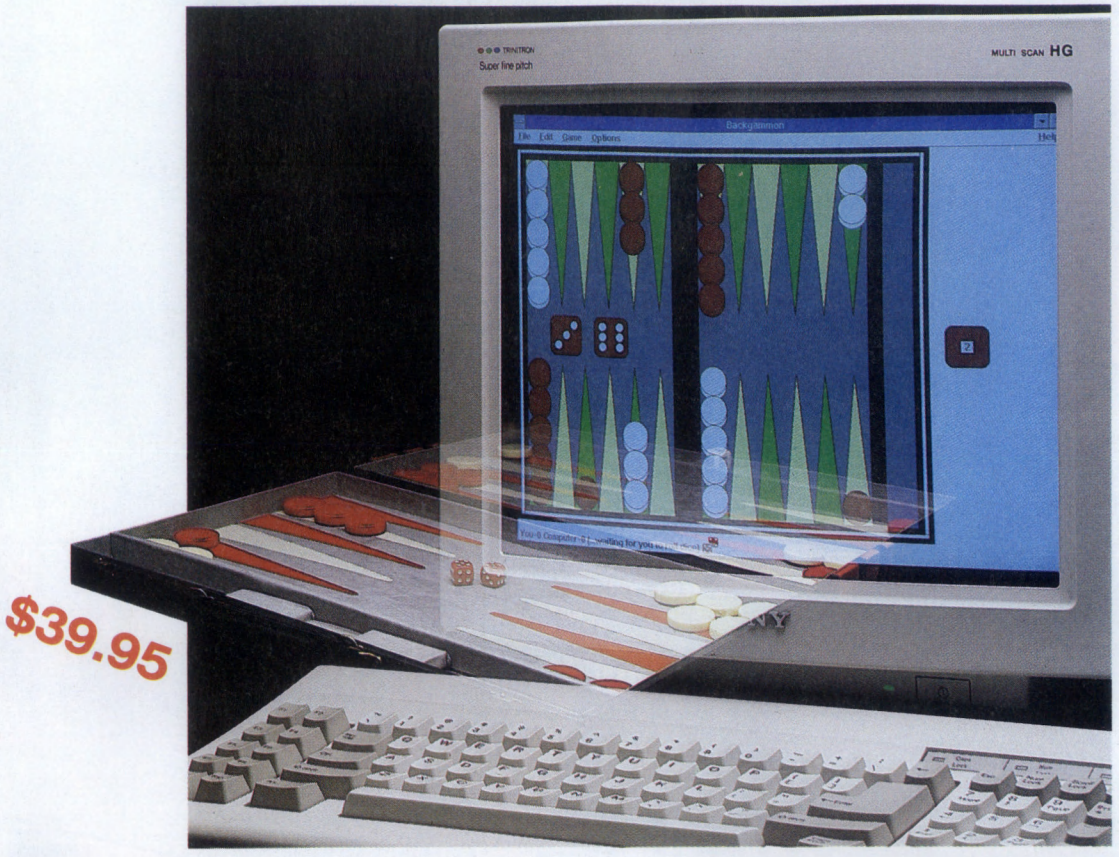
BY GEORGE!



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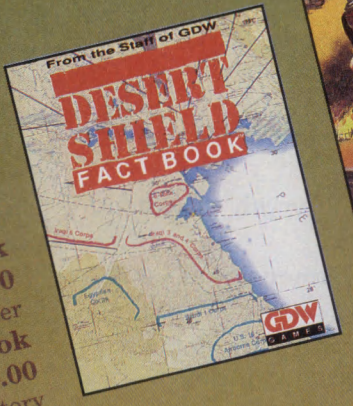

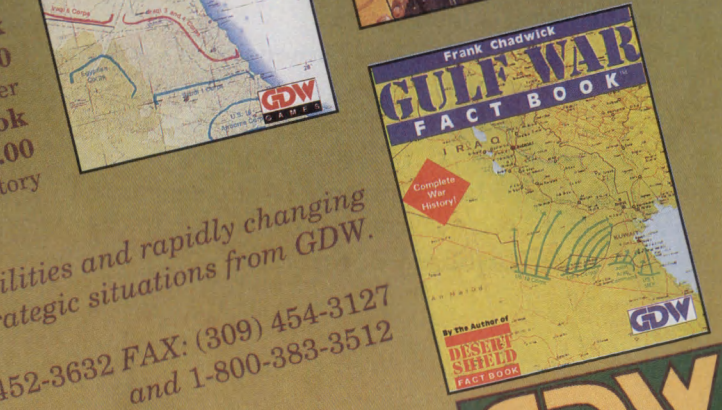

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Reader Service No. 95

Air Warrior

Dial M for modem

By Paul Rigby

Air Warrior is an on-line multi-player air combat game which has been in service for some time on Genie (General Electric Network for Information Exchange). It was written by the prolific Kesmai group, which also has on-line games on Compuserve.

Air Warrior first appeared on Apple Mac screens during 1984. Now the UK-based On-Line can provide **Air Warrior** from its London base for the Apple Mac, PC, Amiga and ST. But although active, the game is still in its beta-version and so, unfortunately, is prone to the odd crash.

Air Warrior is unique. Having played with the text-based multi-player games offered by other comms services and BBS boards, I have generally found these to be lacking in graphical titillation (graphics are normally the black and white, ASCII variety) but they are bereft of that essential ingredient to any game – speed.

There is nothing so infuriating, even in turn-based games such as wargames and role-playing games, as slow and stodgy play. Because most on-line games today depend on graphics generated by the host system, game play often grinds to a stressful halt. This is not the case with **Air Warrior**.

Regular updates

The intriguing aspect of **Air Warrior** is that the computer provides the necessary, colour, graphics and sounds. The software, about 400k on a PC, can simply be downloaded from On-Line's bulletin board. Therefore, the only requirement from the host system is the regular updates of the opponent's position. This wonderful state of affairs means that game play is never held back by that prehistoric tortoise – the modem – which is an essential factor in a flight simulation.

As a secondary spin-off, having proprietary software means that the player can practise his expertise (flight, not combat – the player can only blast bullets and bombs during log-on time) off-line, saving pounds in practice fees during on-line game time.

Pick a plane

Air Warrior offers plenty of choice. Pilots can choose from a P-51 Mustang, Spitfire, Messerschmitt Me262, Messerschmitt Me109, F4U Corsair, B25, A26, and B17 Flying Fortress; First World War flyers can take up a Camel, Spad or Fokker.

After logging on, the player needs to select a theatre of war, an airfield to begin the mission from and, of course, an aircraft.

Selecting 'fly' from the terminal menu transfers the player to the **Air Warrior** world. As a member of a 'country' the player will have enemies and allies – an obvious but, sadly, often ignored fact for the trigger-happy.

Flicking, via function key 1, to a real-time moving map, the player can see his own aircraft/country colour (for example, green). The player should head for the blues or the whites, in which case, while being aware of his buddies. They can assist in the final kill.

The area of flight is surprisingly impressive – in terms of flight dynamics, features and graphics. Cockpit graphics are well drawn, there is a full complement of interior views and the game world, while being no Falcon 3.0, contains a goodly supply of 3D shapes (terrain and buildings).

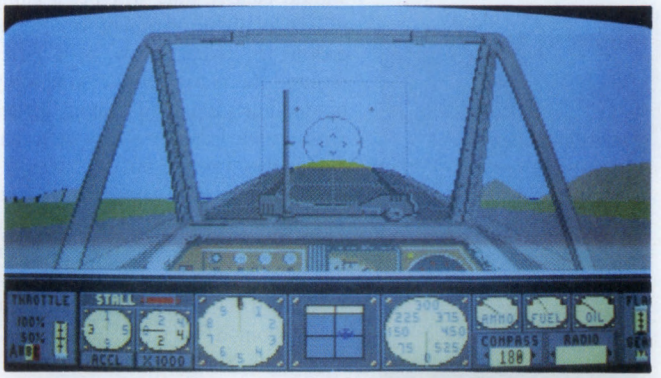
To take off the player turns on the engine (strange how even 'real' flight sims only ask the player to hit the throttle), then punch the throttle, knock off the wheelbrake. Flying towards an opponent will involve a lot of real-time chat between other pilots. Don't forget, opponents are real people, not computer-generated artificial intelligence. This point above all others is what makes **Air Warrior** special.

Communication can be a little confusing at first owing to a rather archaic speech entry system (many commands, while on-line, use an ancient DOS prompt command line – this is the prime candidate for upgrade). But once the player gets used to it he will be rapping with the best of them.

As the player closes onto the opponent he will see the enemy as a dot, which grows larger until it assumes full polygon splendour.

The speed of play will depend on the host computer but it'll fly no slower than any other flight simulation. For a multi-player modem game, that is fast.

Air-to-air combat is not the end of it. Fighters can escort bombers (again, flown by real people) on bombing runs to enemy airfields or radar or take part in an eight-man (eight different people logging on via modem) B-17 crew as a tail-gunner.



Air Warrior is a tour de force in on-line, multi-player gaming. I've tested many on-line games but **Air Warrior** is the only one to fulfil my expectations.

With the thrill of real opponents, the excitement of arranged campaigns, the sheer speed of combat and the wide variety and choice available, I can – once the bugs have been ironed out – wholeheartedly recommend On-Line's **Air Warrior** as the best on-line game in town. SP

On-Line BBS

Tel 081 539 6763, set modem to 1200 baud or higher at 8-N-1

Charges

£1.50 an hour + VAT + standard call charge

Notes

Genie users should check with the network to find out their local node

Tranquilo amigo

After reading the letter *Dead or alive* in *SP 11*, and the editor's reply, I feel a need to respond.

To say the Amiga is 'approaching the end of it's natural life' is fantasy. Rumours of this impending death have been greatly exaggerated. They are purely suppositions made by those at *Strategy Plus*. The same thing was said with the introduction of 16-bit computers over the 8-bit market and this proved to be false.

Simply, there will be two markets in the future: the yuppie PC clones and the other poor bastards. This being the case there will be a need for a low cost 16-bit machine (the Amiga) for some time to come or until the PC reaches a price that is affordable to the masses. Oh yes, let us not forget the CDTV and the soon-to-be-released CD drive for the Amiga at £250 (a PC sound board can cost almost that much). Also a CD will handle games on '10 disks an' all'.

A cynical reader might suggest your PC bias is a unique selling point towards aiming *Strategy Plus* at the US market. A case in point are your otherwise excellent reviews which should clearly state whether a game will be available on other formats. For example, the review of **Castles** omitted the Amiga conversion. Why not include a top 20 of strategy games with a clear reference to which machines they operate on?

Here are some games being converted to the Amiga which you omitted to mention in reviews from one issue of *Strategy Plus* alone:

- **Jetfighter 2** (note the remarks in Upfront, *SP 11*);
- **Chuck Yeager's Air Combat**;
- **Castles**

Lastly, in Upfront issue 11 it should be 'apoplexy' not 'apoplectic'.

I don't own an Amiga so I have no drum to beat, but 1.3 million new Amiga owners this year can't be wrong. Hope in future this bias will not spoil an otherwise excellent magazine.

A Conlan
Lancaster LA1 4UH

What a strange letter. If you don't own an Amiga what are you going on about? The 8-bit market ***is*** *dying. Witness the decision of several chain stores not to stock 8-bit games any more, or the number of magazines that now exclude them. For the price of an Amiga with a monitor and a hard disk you can now buy a PC.*

Sound cards that cost £250 are full blown synthesizer cards; the sound effects they produce for games are just a by-product. The excellent Adlib cards can be picked up for as little £90. ***Jetfighter 2*** *will be converted to the Mac next (cue accusations of Mac bias). The Amiga version is still uncertain at this stage. Likewise the conversions of* ***Castles*** *and* ***CYAC*** *are not even close, so what is the point of us mentioning them?*

Our news section announces releases on new formats ***when they arrive*** *together with the issue (when applicable) of* ***Strategy Plus*** *in which a review appeared.*

Thanks for the grammar lesson, but 'apoplectic' was correct: thus, Amiga readers suffer from apoplexy, but go apoplectic whenever a PC review appears.

Reich and roll

I was interested to see *Strategy Plus* mentioned **Third Reich** by Avalon Hill. Could you give me any idea where I can obtain Avalon Hill computer games in this country?

Father Hodge
St David's Vicarage
Gwent NP3 5UN

Try some of the mail order houses that advertise in the UK issue. The latest release date on the game is October for the ST and Amiga, and the PC in November.

Yours in pain

I own a 1040STFM and CM8833 monitor. Several issues ago you advised ST owners to hang firm on upgrading. Does this advice still hold and what event are we waiting for? Conversion to the PC format will be painful since I am told I will have to replace my monitor as well for VGA graphics. If speed is the only issue it would be interesting to hear what Atari and Commodore have to say about the 80386 being that much faster than anything they can produce.

I would also like to suggest that those software publishers that hope to gain from mass conversion should make the process more palatable by offering a reasonably priced trade-in scheme on the magnetic media of their titles.

FB Dickens
Birmingham
B11 3PG

It's unlikely there will be an ***official*** *funeral for the ST. The situation as I perceive now it is that the decision to upgrade depends pretty much on what sort of games you play. Many US companies such as SSI and Sierra have announced that they will no longer convert to the ST. RAM-hungry flight sims such as* ***Wing Commander*** *and Sierra-style adventure games are best played on the PC, not least because of the speed factor.*

Ironically, Atari and Commodore produce PCs – this magazine is produced on an Atari PC – which leave the Amiga and ST dead when it comes to speed – an Amiga 500 runs at around 7Mhz while modern PCs start at 12Mhz. Most strategy games work perfectly well on an Amiga and there seem to be an abundance of them for that machine.

Yes, you will have to sell your current monitor if you wish to have VGA graphics, but any of feeling of pain will be cured by the sight of 256-colour VGA.

Putting it mildly

Considering how much propaganda you've put out in favour of **PGA Golf**, I hope you will allow me a little space to put an alternate view. *De gustibus non disputandum* and all that, but I really do prefer the **Jack Nicklaus** game. I will concede that the aerodynamic handling of the ball physics in **PGA** is better, and that the automatic reverse angle view of the landing shot is nice, but I reckon these are outweighed by other features.

PGA looks too much like **Leaderboard** with frills. A game which presents golf courses as dead flat just doesn't cut mustard any more. Golf without blind drives, hills, gulleys, and deep bunkers, just isn't golf.

Also, who can be bothered playing round a couple of obscure golf courses all the time? Admittedly the courses you get with **Jack Nicklaus** aren't any better, but you can make your own up using the really excellent designer, and there are plenty of expansion disks with real courses like St Andrews on them.

Playing round a course of which you yourself are the designer adds

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Letters may be chopped to ribbons by a callous, uncaring production editor, especially if they make cracks about spelling and grammar

considerably to the enjoyment. Not to mention the fact that if you find a hole too hard or too easy you can change it to suit.

In passing, **Jack Nicklaus** is the only golf game I've seen that permits the execution of one's favourite shot in real golf – in my case the long putt from the fairway onto the green. I've even holed several such shots. There is certainly scope for improvement in the **Jack Nicklaus** game, and if you could import the best bits of **PGA** you would have a real winner. But given the necessity of choosing, I would take **Jack Nicklaus** over **PGA** every time.

Roger Musson
Edinburgh

*The editorial preference, is for **Links**, despite the fact that I once obtained a hole-in-one in **PGA**. Another reason for liking **Links** is the sound emitted when the Q key is pressed. Check it.*

Cardinal sin

I decided to put ink to paper first to ask your help. But after receiving this month's issue I feel I must mention my disappointment.

I started my subscription at issue five, although I had bought a copy or two before this. I had been searching years for a magazine like yours. It had everything – PBM, boardgames and computer games. Nothing like the tacky comics around that one had to put up with.

What a shock, however, the last few issues have been: the paper is awful, especially the cover. And some of the reviews are heading towards the children's comics.

I read an article on **The Cardinal of the Kremlin** – what a load of rubbish. It told me nothing about the game; it was just someone drivelling on in a little story of his own making. To add to this there are no more boardgames or PBM.

If the magazine continues down this path, there may come a time in the future when I will have to change my allegiance to, perhaps, *PC Leisure*. Please stop now; turn back before it is too late.

Now that's out of my system, here's my real reason for writing. After my little Electron went to a better home, I bought an XT with Hercules and CGA and a mono monitor. One of the games I bought for it was **Wolfpack** by Mirrorsoft. The game worked fine with no problems.

I, however, grew out of this machine and now own a 286 with 1Mb SVGA video card and SVGA colour screen. When I try to run **Wolfpack** now, after a little while it hangs and I have to press the reset button to get out. This also happens if, when going into the game, you leave it in the construction screen and do not touch the computer at all. I have other games that work fine, such as **F19, Elite, Test Drive** and **Battle Chess.** Is there anyone out there who can help me?

While I'm here, is there any news on the Robin Hood games? My wife and I have just been to see the film and would like to participate.

MJ Nicholls
Reading
Berkshire RG6 1AY

*This magazine is printed on high quality art paper. Your comments are a waste of it. After going though four editors in 11 issues **PC Leisure** has folded, though there are still plenty of options if you really want to go down market.*

We have never professed to be a PBM magazine. The boardgames section was dropped because of lack of reader (and company) interest.

*Try contacting Mirrorsoft which distributes **Wolfpack** in the UK (071 928 1454). The **Robin Hood** game from Millennium is reviewed this issue. Sierra's **Conquest of the Longbow** should be reviewed in the next.*

Military mind

During the past few weeks I have been very tempted indeed to buy **UMS II**. (*You mad fool – Ed.*) To help me decide, I would like to know the answers to two questions.

First, when will the **Planet Editor** be released and how much will it cost?

Second, if it comes with newer versions of **UMS II**, how will people who bought the older game be able to obtain the editor – will it be sent to registered customers free of charge, or will they have to pay a surcharge?

Stuart Hardy
Sheffield
S31 8LZ

***The Planet Editor** will be released next month and will be compatible with all versions of **UMS II**, according to Microprose. The price has yet to be decided, but will vary according to format.*

Seconds out

I own an Amiga 500 and bought that excellent game **Second Front**. Twice, however, I have had to return the game to the supplier as it kept crashing at different parts of the program.

Now I have heard that **Second Front** is being taken off the market because it contains a bug.

Does this mean that all copies of the game are bugged or just a certain batch. And will the game be reissued minus bug, and if so, when?

B Webb
Middlesbrough
Cleveland TS3 8LZ

***Second Front** has not been withdrawn from the market, although there is a bug in the Amiga version. The program crashes when you click on an empty hex. SSI's solution? Don't click on an empty hex.*

Fired up

With regards to the article *Wargames, a briefing* in *SP 8*, I was impressed by Mike Siggins' write-up of **Fire Brigade**.

Since reading the article I have tried but failed to get my hands on a copy of the game, and I have since been informed that this game is to be withdrawn.

I would be grateful if you could help clarify this matter for me, and if you can tell me where I can get a copy of this game for an Atari 520STE.

Andrew Kerr
Edinburgh
EH11 4QF

It's not so much been withdrawn as plain hard to find. Try our classified section.

Waggle rating

I notice quite a few changes have happened since issue 7. Items dropped which I liked to see were the price and the machine the software was reviewed on.

I understand that there is a review going on about some form of ratings. The only extra information I would like to see either in the review itself or as a rating would be a dexterity or

joystick/mouse waggling ability required.

For example, I bought **Their Finest Hour** mainly for the strategy elements, but I find that the speed of reactions needed for the strategy game are way beyond my abilities. I do enjoy the game, but I miss out on a lot of its potential owing to my geriatric fingers.

Please pass on to Tudor Boddam-Whetham (Rebound, issue 10) that you can play **Fire Brigade** on an Atari 520STFM as I have done so myself for several months before I bought an extra 0.5Mb. The difference is that only two colours are available with 0.5Mb as opposed to four colours with 1Mb. this makes absolutely no difference to the play of the game – it's just not as pretty to look at.

Neil Williamson
Riyadh 11531
Saudi Arabia

*Ah, a lucky ST **Fire Brigade** owner. The ratings war has been resolved: 59% against, 36% for, 5% can't read anyway.*

Plus points

I was very interested in the article about Sublogic's **Flight Assignment: Airline Transport Pilot** in issue 10. I own a copy of the program and except for a few minor bugs I am generally very pleased about it. I find *Strategy Plus* very enjoyable and an extremely useful guide to new software products.

On page 44 of issue 11 there was an advert for a program called **Jet Instrument Trainer**, which was described as a Boeing 727 simulator. I have been unable to obtain any information about this product locally and wondered whether you might be able to provide any help.

M Klemme
Sydney
Australia

The Boeing 727 simulator is about four years old. For further information I suggest you check with the maker, Sublogic.

War fair

I was very pleased to find *Strategy Plus* at the newsagent in the main railway station here in Bonn.

Over the years I have bought or subscribed to a number of different magazines all supposedly aimed at the wargamer market only to find they are either so trivial, both in content and language, or over-specialized to such an extent that they are almost incomprehensible. It is, therefore, refreshing to find a magazine that does not treat me as a moron or that assumes I have nothing to do except to study wargaming – unfortunately I have to work to be able to buy new games.

SG Whistlecraft
Bonn
Germany

Eagle eyes

Am I the only one who feels he has been totally ripped off after buying **Strike Eagle 2**, having already bought **Stealth Fighter**. Apart from the fact you can turn without stalling, and one or two minor changes, the games are identical. There also seems to be a big difference between the so-called simulations: on ace rating in **Eagle 2** you can still be hit by numerous missiles and gunfire (12 missile hits in one game) and still be flying, despite it being the most difficult mode. Microprose is undoubtedly one of the best names around for simulations, but £34 for something you already have is taking the piss.

As far as aircraft sims go, Dave Marshall's **F-16 Combat Pilot** is still miles ahead of anything else – and I'm talking about real simulations.

B Reed
Eastbourne
Sussex

Bleak midwinter

Having been playing the ST version of **Midwinter II** since the 16-bit show, your review in issue 11 gave me renewed hope when I saw the comment 'hard disk strongly recommended'. Alas, a call to the Microprose hot-line confirmed there was no chance of being able to install the ST version on a hard disk.

This is a major omission for a company such as Microprose on a game which, while excellent in all other areas, is rendered virtually unplayable by constant and lengthy disk accessing. Every time you destroy an enemy unit, every time you talk to anyone, practically every major action requires a lengthy wait while the disk drive churns away.

Please bring this to the attention of your other 'poor relation' ST readers before they splash out their hard-earned money. They should really know what frustrations they are letting themselves in for. It is in fact a credit to the overall quality of the game that I am willing (just!) to persevere despite this drawback, but it could be dramatically improved with a hard disk. How about it Microprose?

Microprose also advised me that owing to problems during the testing of **Railroad Tycoon**, ST owners may have to wait another month or so.

Colin Cooper
Leigh on Sea
Essex

The short answer is that to make the ST version hard drive installable would have required a 1Mb machine. The installed user base of such machines, according to Microprose, would have been too small to make a project like Midwinter 2 commercially viable.

Typhoon passes

I wrote to you about the trouble I was having with the SSI game **Typhoon of Steel**. Soon after I received a mail package with a copy of the game that runs perfectly on all systems.

There was no covering letter or address, but I feel my grateful thanks must go to you gentlemen for helpfulness beyond the call of duty.

John Hart
Morden
Surrey

*A heart of gold that's **Strategy Plus** but US Gold, which sent you the new game, should share the kudos on this.*

Men's magazine

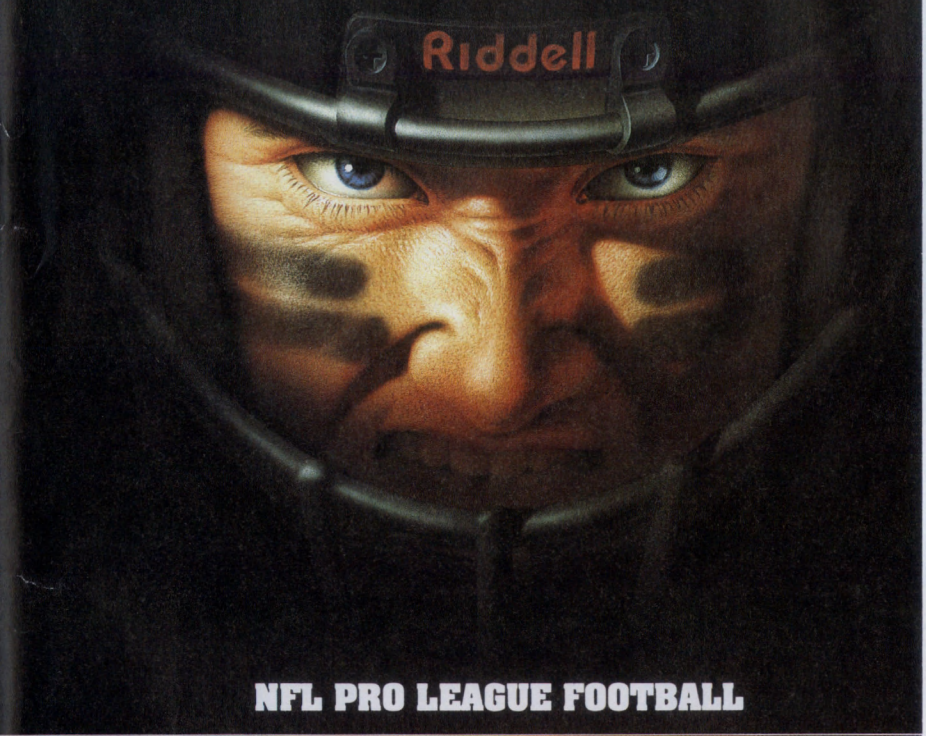
Please keep on making such a good magazine, and keep covering the IBM as the main computer. Nobody, in a few years' time, will hear about the Atari ST, and maybe even the Amiga.

Keep printing in-depth strategy tips and hints for games like **Harpoon**. The arcade type of games are getting good coverage in other magazines.

Be a thinking man's magazine.

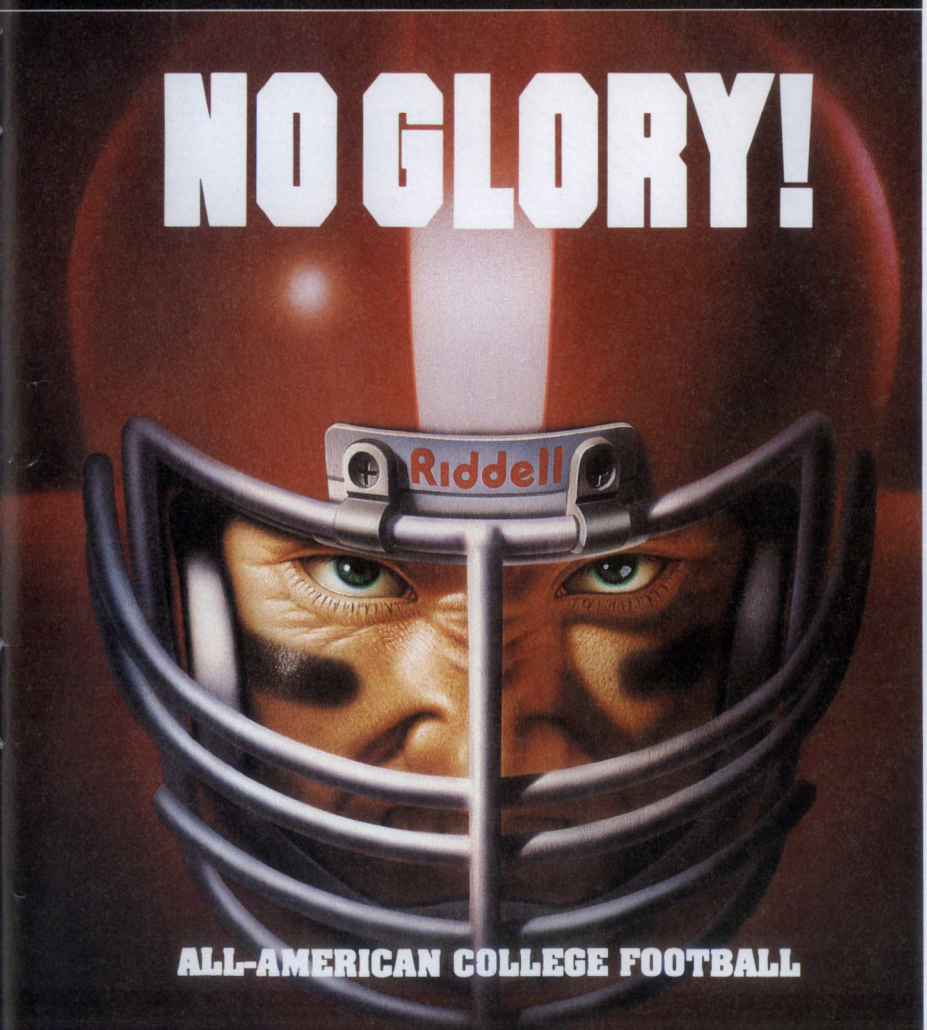
Hans Guenter Benz
5620 Velbert 15
Germany

NO GUTS!



NFL PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL

NO GLORY!



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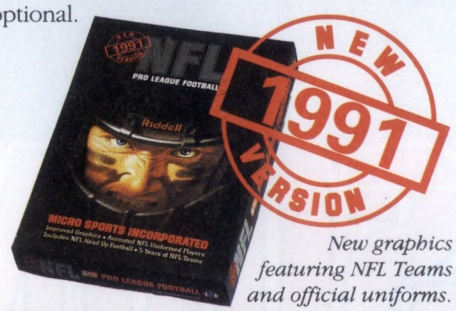

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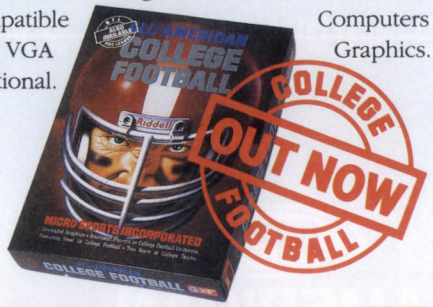

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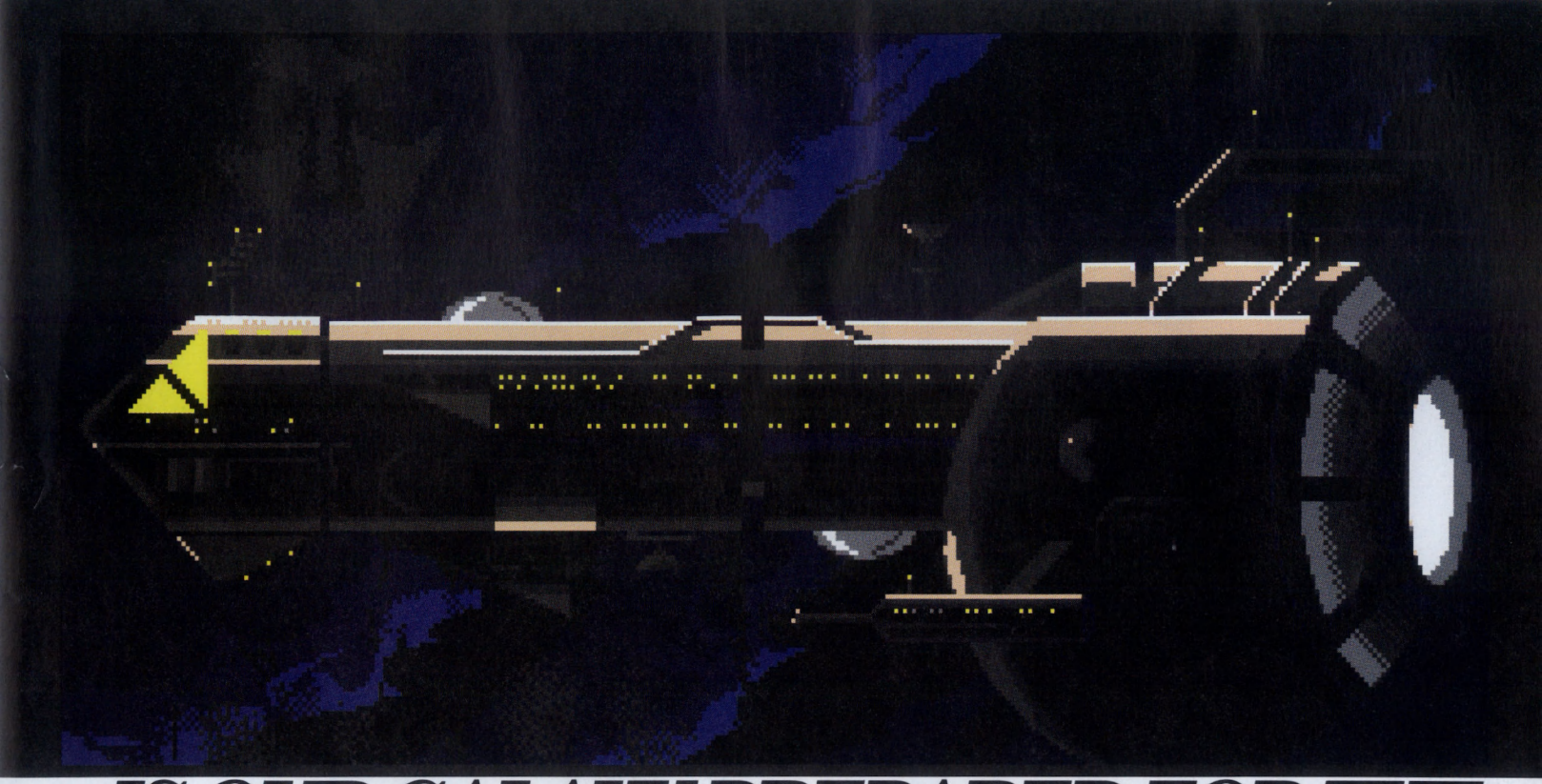
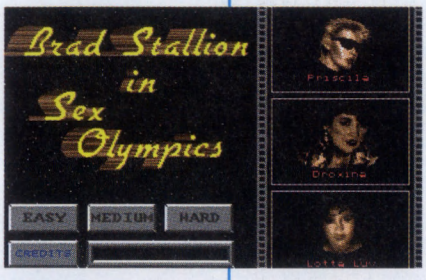


IS OUR GALAXY PREPARED FOR THE SEX OLYMPICS?

It's time for the Sex Olympics to begin again. However, this year the infamous Dr. Dildo has entered the competition as part of his devious plot to control the Universe. If he can keep his batteries fully charged, he has an excellent chance of accomplishing his goal. Thinking quickly, Headquarters called upon Captain Brad Stallion, wooer of women, and eradicator of evil to represent the Earth in this inter-galactic frolic. And of course, Brad Stallion never goes anywhere without his legendary space ship, the "Big Thruster".



Have you completed your training for this important challenge? Are you prepared to become Captain Brad Stallion and go head-to-head with Dr. Dildo? Can you find and solve the puzzle of seducing nine different women before your opponent? Can you solve the mystery of the CDG weapon? Can you find Dr. Dildo's spare batteries before he does? Will you be able to control yourself in the hall of drones? These questions can only truly be answered by playing ***Sex Olympics***.

Sex Olympics combines sexual, tongue-in-cheek humor, adult (R-rated) graphics, unusual sound effects and an icon-driven point-and-click interface to create a game that's a little different than your usual fare. To keep the game interesting, there are three different levels of play, and the locations of clues and objects change each time you play.

Why not compete in the ***Sex Olympics***, where a little metal medallion isn't your only reward?

Suggested retail price $39.95. Amiga, IBM and Atari ST versions are available. Available at dealers everywhere.

If you can't locate a copy of ***Sex Olympics*** at your local dealer, you can order one by calling:

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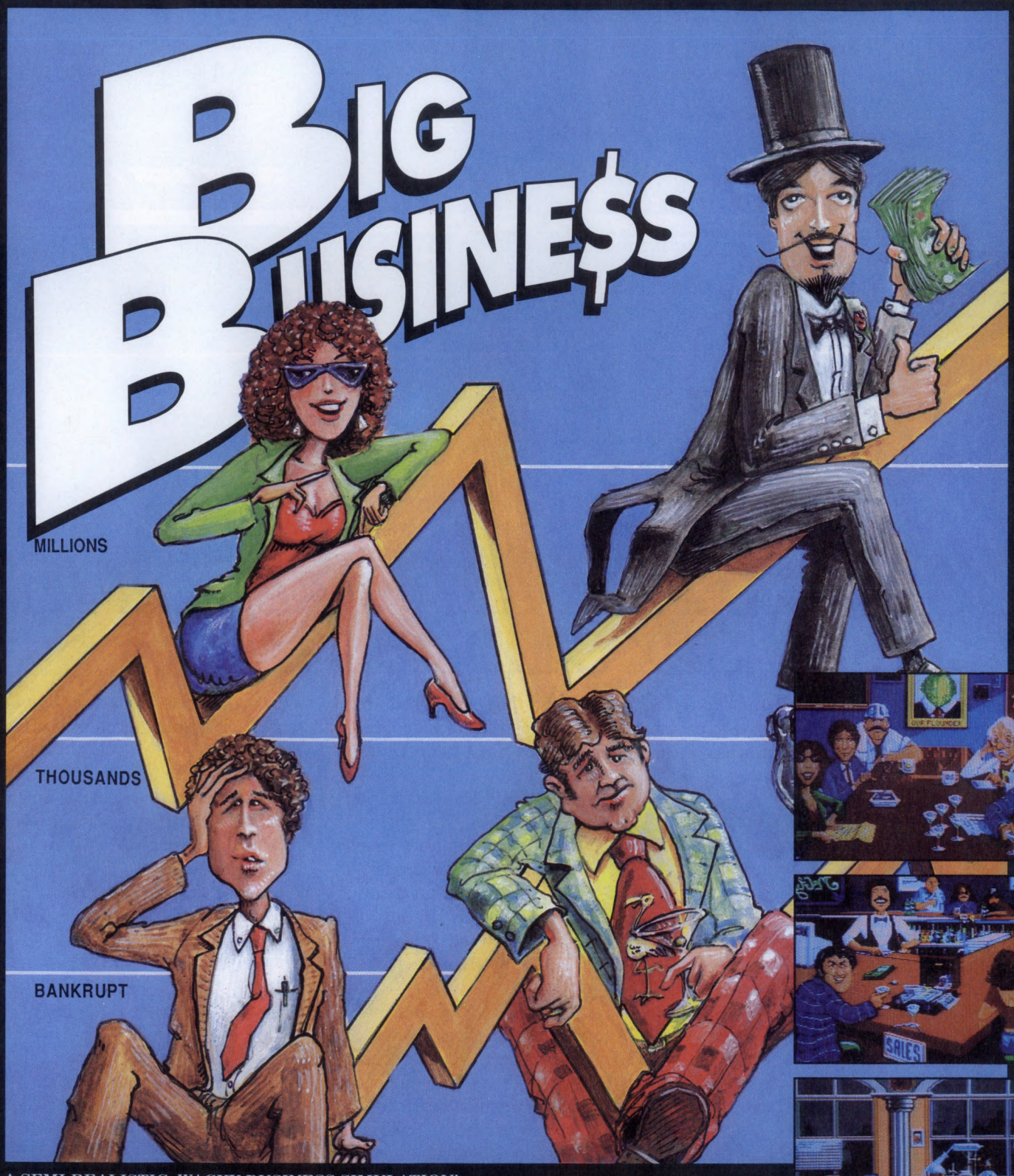

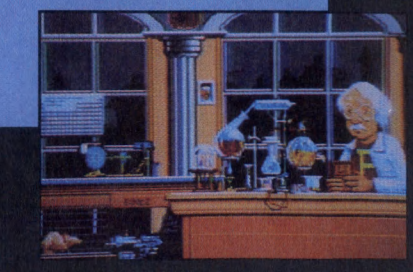

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'DUSK OF THE GODS' from **INTERSTEL** is a roleplaying game that lets you enter Valhalla. Become one of Odin's champions, explore the realms of creation (Asgard, Midgard, & Jotenheim), seek out knowledge and attempt to tip the scales in favor of Odin at the battle of Ragnorok. Features include accurate world of Viking mythology, 256 color VGA, sound board support & point click interface. **$38**

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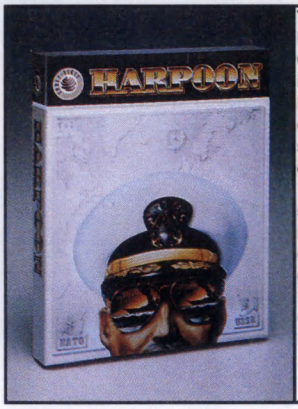

THREE SIXTY PACIFIC'S 'HARPOON CHALLENGER PAK' is a realistic view of NATO vs USSR. Play either side in this high stakes cat & mouse game. With more than 100 authentic weapons systems, this is modern naval warfare. Not just one game but an entire game system. Includes Harpoon, Battleset 1: GIUK , Battleset 2: North Atlantic Convoy, Scenario Editor, & Battle Book. **$54**

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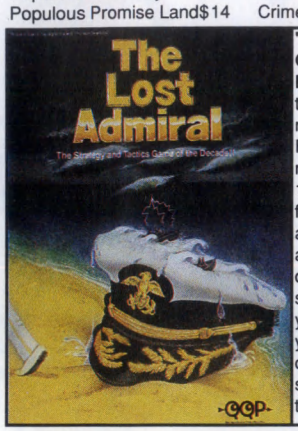
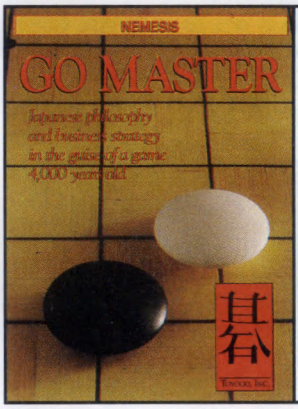
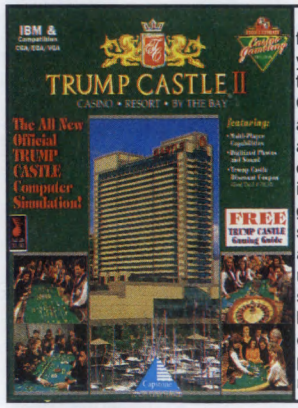


'LOST ADMIRAL' from **QUANTUM QUALITY PRODUCTIONS** is a turn based production naval strategy game. Features 9 scenarios, a random map scenario, 15 campaign games, flagships with special abilities, very strong artificial intelligence, in depth officers ranking system, accumulates your career history as you play, 2 player option, and sound board support. In short better than **EMPIRE.** **$34**



'NEMESIS GO' from **TOYOGO** is the ultimate computer **GO** program. With the simplicity of checkers and the complexity of chess, **GO** is both an enjoyable recreation and a serious strategy game. **GO MASTER** is a basic **GO** player and tutor. **JOSEKI GENIUS** adds complex corner openings. **TACTICAL WIZARD** is the ultimate tutor offering in depth tactical analysis. **GO** is 4000 years old. **$39**



'TRUMP CASTLE II' from **CAPSTONE** puts you in Atlantic City at the Trump Castle Casino Resort with actual digitized images and sound from the casino itself. Features include 256 color VGA graphics, sound board support, digitized animations and multiplayer capability for six gambling games, baccarat, blackjack, craps, roulette, video poker, and slot machines. **$32**

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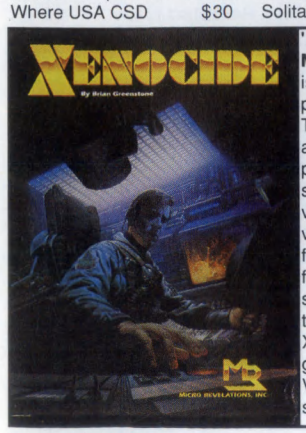
'STARTREK: THE 25th ANNIVERSARY' from **INTERPLAY** combines a realistic 3D space flight simulator with an in depth role-playing game. Pilot the Enterprise through a simulation similar to WING COMMANDER. Discover dozens of planets, beam down to explore them. Each planet with its own unique adventure. Features point-and-click, 256 color VGA & adlib support. **$36**

'ACTION STATIONS' by **RAW SOFTWARE** is a naval suface combat simulation. This game covers 1922 to 45 in amazing detail. Features 21 status displays, 30 scenarios in the Atlantic, Med and Pacific, subordinate comanders, treatment of smoke, starshells, flares, radar, weather, shore batteries, aircraft spotting & more. Ships are modeled in detail. This is the premier WW2 naval game. **$29**



'XENOCIDE' from **MICRO REVELATIONS** is a fast paced arcade puzzle strategy game. This is an all in one arcade game with first person 3D view simulator, profile side view, and top down view. Three moons with four levels each require fast reflexes and sound strategy/puzzle solving to obliterate the Xenomorphs. Good graphics in 256 color VGA with sound board support. **$29**

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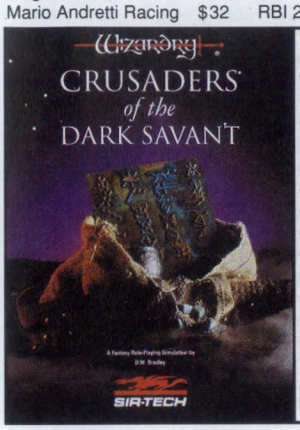
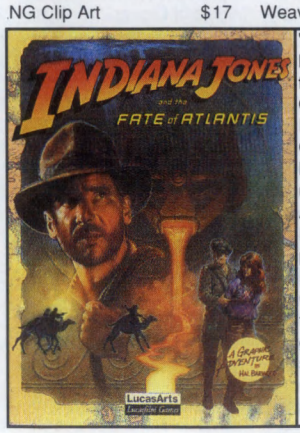


'CRUSADERS OF THE DARK SAVANT: WIZARDRY 7' from **SIRTECH** is high tech fantasy roleplaying at its best. **WIZ7** includes multiple beginnings, outdoor campaigns in caves, forests, rivers, dungeons, a complete city. NPCs talk to each other & entire computer controlled parties compete with the player. Features point & click interface, 256 color VGA & sound board support. **$39**



'INDIANA JONES:THE FATE OF ATLANTIS' from **LUCASFILM GAMES** is the fourth Indy Jones adventure. Once again it is Indy vs Nazis as he tries to uncover the secrets of Atlantis. Join Sophia Hapgood, archeologist psychic, to visit Iceland, Monte Carlo, Africa, & Crete. True to form features 200 locations, great animation with scaling, 256 color VGA, interactive sound, point & click interface. **$38**

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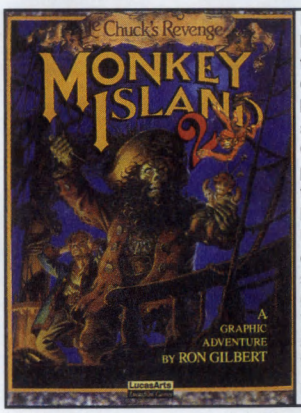

In **'SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND II'** from **LUCASFILM GAMES** LeChucky is back & he is ready to settle the score. Guybrush must unite 3 pieces of the map to find the treasure and rid himself of LeChuck. New locations, new cast of characters, plus special appearances of Governor Marley, Voodoo Princess, & Stan. With 256 color VGA, & sound board reggae tunes. **$38**

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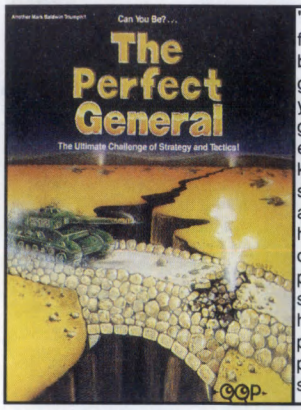

'PERFECT GENERAL' from **QQP INC** is a turn based ground war game. Features 12 years of play testing, great maps in VGA, easy to use mouse or keyboard interface, 14 scenarios, very strong artificial intelligence, hidden movement, line of sight option, in depth player ranking system, saves your career history as you play, 2 player option, modem play, sound board support. **$34**

'HYPERSPEED' from **MICROPROSE** is a combination 3D space combat simulator and roleplaying game. Pilot a complex starship armed with fighters, kamikaze ships, plasma canon and remote probes. Conduct deep space diplomacy, negotiate with dozens of alien races, make alliances and treaties, each alien race responds according to its own customs and hidden agendas. **$39**

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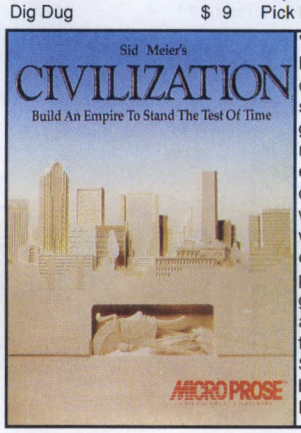
'RED BARON' from **DYNAMIX** is the best WWI flight simulator. Take either side, fly 28 aircraft including Albatros D3, Fokker Triplane, DH2 Pusher, Sopwith Camel, Spad 7. Amazing AI, fly against real aces who use historically accurate tactics. Fly multiplane missions vs multiple enemies, single mission or campaign game. VCR with pan & zoom, 256 color VGA, & sound support. **$34**



'CIVILIZATION' from **MICROPROSE** "is a competitive multi-player strategy game with a great deal of replayability" **CGW**. You explore cities, continents, and the world in an **EMPIRE** like way. You make economic decisions prioritizing technological growth in order to advance more rapidly than the other players. Sort of a cross betweeen **SIMCITY** & **EMPIRE**. **$39**

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'FINAL CONFLICT' from **IMPRESSIONS** is a strategy game of power politics & global warfare. Allocate resources. Build factories and control food production. Produce armies, tanks, ships, & missiles. Send out spies & conduct diplomacy to uncover military secrets & win allies. Features 95 countries, nuclear winter, optional arcade missile sequence, entirely icon driven. **$34**

MINDCRAFT'S RULES OF ENGAGEMENT is a real time strategic space combat game. Command a starship and an entire fleet with subordinate ship commanders in multiple combat missions. Using **BREACH 2** you can send out boarding & landing parties. A comprehensive mission builder lets you design enemy races, starships, solar systems, even the personalities of ship commanders. **$38**

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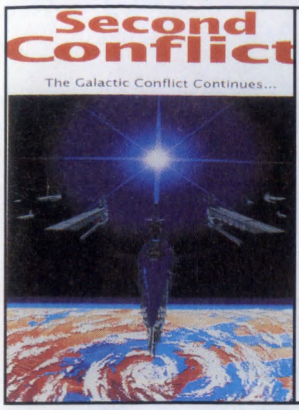
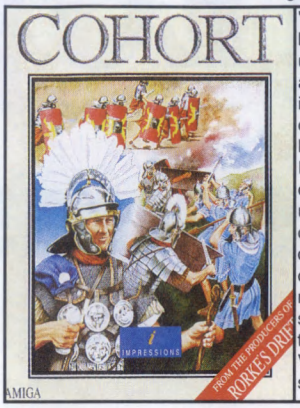
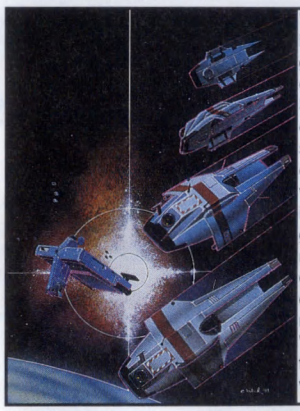


'SECOND CONFLICT' from **JSOFT** is a space strategy game. Control the economy, military, and civilian population. Balance population growth against military recruiting. Allocate resources to produce battleships, planetary defenses, stealth ships, transports and missiles. Multiple human and computer players, point and click WINDOWS interface, and a scenario editor are included. **$34**



'COHORT' from **IMPRESSIONS** is an unusual wargame using a miniatures style interface to cover combat between roman legions & their enemies. Features animated combat & movement, 7 unit types, infantry, cavalry, & archers, user definable army composition, 4 different maps, scenario builder, stop & give orders real time combat, 256 color VGA, & sound board support. **$34**

'RORKE'S DRIFT' from **IMPRESSIONS** is a detailed simulation of the battle between 137 british soldiers & 4000 Zulu warriors that took place Jan 22 1879. You command the British in their attempt to hold out aginst the onslaught. You control each man, standing, sitting, prone, aiming, firing, reloading, running or walking. With 3D map, animated combat & movement mouse support & 256 color VGA. **$34**



'WORLDS AT WAR' by **RAW SOFTWARE** is a game of naval combat on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, you can play the tactical study for an hour; or the campaign game for a weekend. Features include random map generation, hidden movement, design your own task forces, capture planets to build more units. **CGW** said "...like **EMPIRE**, what this game has is play-value". **$29**

TIGLON'S 'DECISION AT GETTYSBURG' gives you command of either army at the turning point of the American Civil War. Features include real time play, historical accuracy, hidden or revealed movement and 147 square miles of detailed VGA maps. The simulation allows you to combine units, create new smaller units, transfer men or supplies and send out patrols. **$29**

SID MEIER'S 'RAILROAD TYCOON' from **MICROPROSE** is a game of empire building in the golden age of railroads. You lay track, manipulate stock, schedule trains, operate signals, engage in rate wars, and build industry all in an effort to outwit, outsmart, out scoundrel the rail barrons of history. It is not easy. This is CGW game of the year and one of the best games of all time. **$34**

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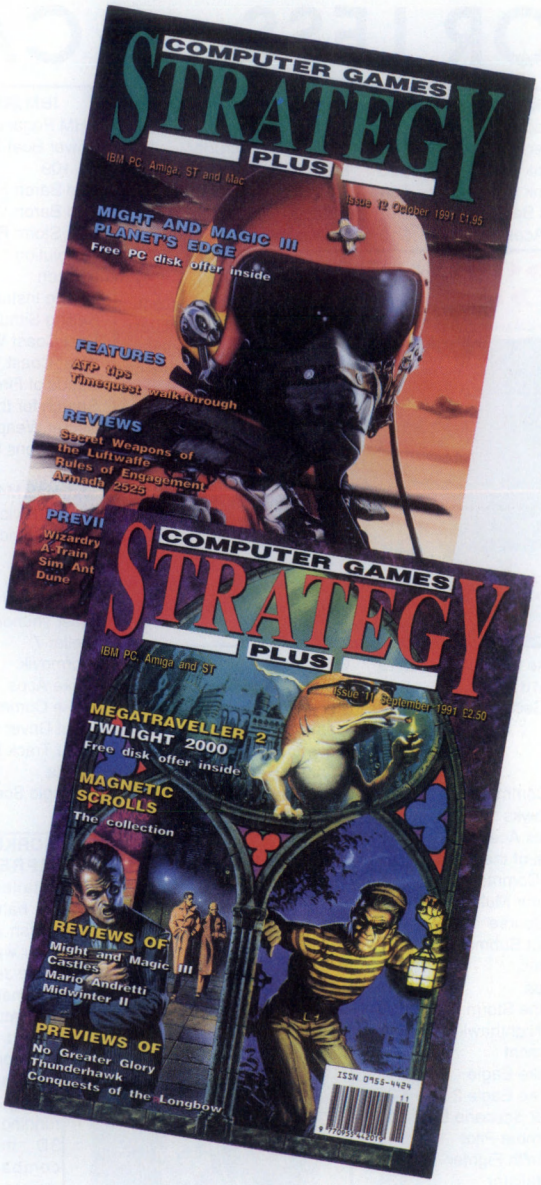

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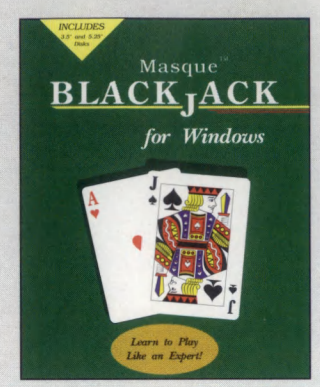

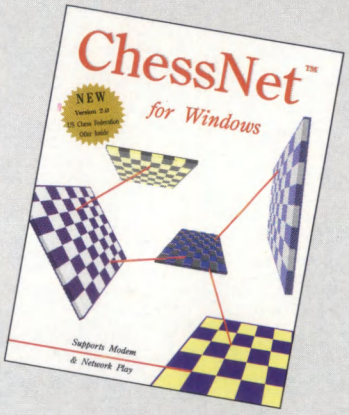

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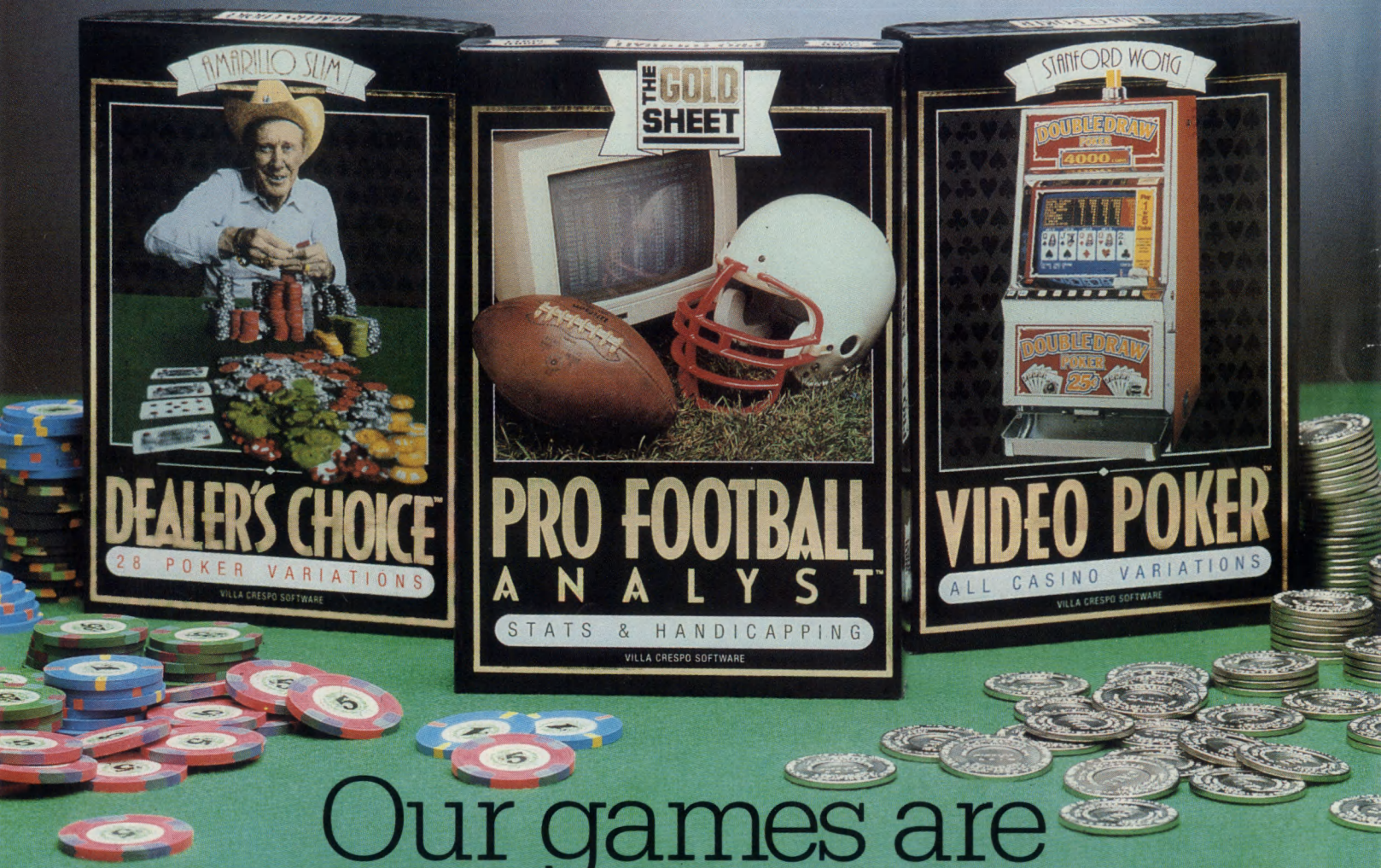

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